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THEMES OF PROKOFIEV'S EARLY PERIOD: A MELODIC ANALYSIS

by

ZDENKA BERKA ©

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Department of Music for acceptance, a thesis entitled Themes of Prokofiev's Early Period: A Melodic Analysis, submitted by Zdenka Berka in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Music Theory.

Violet B. Archer

Supervisor

Malcolm Forsyth

John H. Ellis

Date April 8, 1976

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to compile an annotated catalogue of themes of Prokofiev's works of his early period (1908-1918). The annotations are expanded to brief melodic analyses of each theme.

The method of analysis is explained in the preface.

A biographical sketch of Prokofiev's early period is given in the first chapter.

The music material to be analyzed is divided into four chapters according to medium, and arranged in chronological order.

In the concluding chapter, both a comparison of themes of different media and a summary of the overall style of Prokofiev's early themes are presented.

PREFACE

1. The Area of Study and the Method of Analysis

It is not possible for any composer to foretell his becoming a classic of a particular epoch in the history of music. Only the test of time will reveal real quality in any art.

The following two quotations show some of the difficulties which Prokofiev, like many other artists, had to face on his way towards universal recognition:

"This energetic, rhythmic, harsh, coarse, primitive cacophony hardly deserves to be called music."[1] "Crude, leaping, and absurdly artificial, it gives a true picture of the modern 'football' generation. There is something about it that is stupid, inane, and blockheaded."[2]

Prokofiev answered by the following:

> A classical composer is a madman who composes music that is incomprehensible to his own generation. He has succeeded in discovering a certain logic that is still unknown to others and hence these others cannot follow his reasoning. Only after some time the paths he has charted, provided they are genuine, will become clear to everyone else. To write only according to the rules laid down by classical composers of the past means to be only a pupil and not a master. Such a composer is easily understood by his contemporaries but he has no chance of outliving his generation.[3]

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[1] From Leonid Sabaneyev's review of Prokofiev's First Piano Concerto, Op. 10 in Golos Moskvy, No. 175, 1912. Quoted from Israel Nestyev, Prokofiev, 2nd ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. 63.

[2] From L. Sabaneyev's review of Prokofiev's Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14 in Golos Moskvy, 1914. Quoted from Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 82.

[3] Prokofiev's "answer" to music critics, who misunderstood his music, is extracted from his Autobiography: Semyon Shlifstein, S. Prokofiev: Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 69.

The music of Prokofiev has already proved to be of lasting value and he himself has become a classic of twentieth-century music.

Statements like those of L. Sabaneyev belong to an extreme line of criticism which accompanied Prokofiev during the young years of his life. However, even then he had his friends, who found pleasure in listening to his music (among them composers N. Myaskovsky and B. Asafyev, music critic V. Karatygin and poet V. Mayakovsky). But it is also true that much later, even at present, the music of Prokofiev's early period[4] has been regarded as inferior to his later works in its melodic aspect.

If melody or melodiousness meant the same as lyricism, there would perhaps be some foundation for such a criticism, since Prokofiev himself admitted that "for a long time I was given no credit for any lyrical gift whatever, and for want of encouragement it developed slowly."[5] However, it may not be just to equate the meanings of lyricism and melodiousness. In Prokofiev's words, "it [the lyrical line] appears first as a thoughtful and meditative mood, not always associated with the melody, or, at any rate with the long melody."[6]

Since this thesis deals with the melodic aspect of Prokofiev's music, namely with his melodic themes, it will prove valuable to examine first the possible meanings of the word "melody".

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[4] Prokofiev's music is usually divided into three periods: 1. Early Russian period (1908-1918); 2. Middle or Foreign period (1918-1934, the years spent abroad, mostly in America and France); 3. Late Russian period (1934-1953, the years after his return to the Soviet Union).

[5] Shlifstein, S. Prokofiev: Autobiography, p. 37.

[6] Ibid., p. 36.

M. Aranovsky, in his book Melodika S. Prokofieva [Melodies of S. Prokofiev],[7] devotes one whole chapter to the problem of "the theory" of melody. He says: "The theory of melody is young, having originated only at the beginning of this century; consequently, it has not yet laid a foundation for an independent branch of theoretical musicology. "...the word melody alone can have the following meanings:

1. expressive means of music
2. 'horizontalness' in general
3. a top voice
4. a concrete melody
5. an embodiment of the melodic source, melos, melodiousness."[8]

Then the author discusses very thoroughly the nature of melody, its perception from the physiological as well as psychological points of view, and finally he states several definitions of the meaning of melody. Among his observations are the following:

"The laws of musical logic are the laws of ties among sounds... In the process of historical development these ties organized themselves into systems." Scales, harmony, form and in a lesser way rhythm all create systems of stereotypes, but not melody.

"Melody originates as a result of a synthesis of all or almost all systems...melody is a synthetic phenomenon...", and since "...the style has the role of unification of the stereotypes...the melodic style is an organic unity of stereotypes, systems and intonational complexes.

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[7] Mark Aranovsky, Melodika S. Prokofieva [Melodies of S. Prokofiev] (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1969), 231.

[8] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

"Melody is a structure which possesses a unity of content and which originates on a basis of intonational ties among tones." Or in short: "Melody is a developed, closed intonational structure."[9]

In this writer's opinion, the final definition most closely expresses the meaning of "a concrete melody" (the fourth category of the above-mentioned meanings of melody). This implies that the material of the themes of compositions should be studied, since only in melodic themes are the necessary qualities (the development and completion of intonational structure) present. In other parts of a composition the melodiousness simply applies to its other manifestations, mainly to the "'horizontalness' in general" (the second category of the meanings of melody).

The aim of this thesis is to define and analyze themes of Prokofiev's early compositions and to draw conclusions about their overall melodic style.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to study all themes in all the modifications they undergo in the course of their development throughout a composition. This would exceed the scope of this type of project. Therefore, only the original statements of the themes are singled out and analyzed from the following aspects:

1. Pitch range
2. Prominent intervals
3. Implied scales
4. Tonality and implied harmonies

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[9] Ibid., pp. 23-37.

5. Rhythmic design, meter, tempo
6. Phrasing
7. Use of rests
8. Principles of sequence, variation and repetition
9. Dynamics, accents, touch and other sound effects.

The music material selected for analysis is divided into four chapters according to medium:

1. Piano solo (Chapter II)
2. Solo instrument with an accompaniment (Chapter III)
3. Vocal music (Chapter IV)
4. Orchestra (Chapter V).

The compositions included in each of these chapters are arranged in chronological order.

In Chapter I, the background and origin of all works studied are discussed, and Chapter VI both offers a comparison of themes for different media and summarizes the characteristic traits of all themes of Prokofiev's early period (1908-1918).

It is hoped that the melodic analysis of Prokofiev's themes will prove to be a useful contribution to the overall knowledge of the musical style of one of the greatest melodists of the twentieth century.

2. Music Material

This study deals only with music of Prokofiev's early period (1908-1918) and only with compositions assigned opus numbers; the material to be examined covers opera one to thirty.

However, the problem arises whether or not to include works composed during the period studied but revised or rearranged in later years.

In most cases, only the later editions of the works are available. The problem is compounded by the fact that it is not always possible to tell which musical ideas are new and which have survived from the earlier attempts. In order to avoid misleading conclusions, it was decided to exclude the following compositions from this project:

Op. 5 Sinfonietta in A major for orchestra (1909, 1914, 1929)[10]

Op. 8 Autumnal Sketch for orchestra (1910, 1914, 1934)

Op. 16 Second Piano Concerto (1913, 1923)[11]

Op. 21 The Buffoon, ballet (1915, 1920, suite from the ballet 1922)

Op. 24 The Gambler, opera (1915-16, 1927)

Op. 26 Third Piano Concerto (1917-21).[12]

The following three compositions were never published and the manuscripts or copies of the same were not available for examination:

Op. 6 Dreams, symphonic poem for orchestra (1910)

Op. 7 Two Poems for women's voices and orchestra (1909-10)

Op. 13 Maddalena, opera in one act (1911, 1913)[13]

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[10] The third and only available version of 1929 was given a new opus number--Op. 48.

[11] "'I have so completely rewritten the Second Concerto that it might almost be considered the Fourth', Prokofiev informed his Moscow friends in a letter on December 4, 1923." Quoted from Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 202.

[12] The Concerto was begun in Russia but completed during the Foreign period in France.

[13] The manuscript of Maddalena is held in London under a curious copyright law. For a more detailed discussion of this matter see the article by Rita McAllister, "Prokofiev's Early Opera Maddalena," Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association, XCVI (1969-70), pp. 137-147.

Op. 30 Seven They are Seven. cantata (1917-18) was published only once in 1925, but because of a very limited number of copies, it was not possible to obtain one for this research.

The remaining twenty opera (including some seventy compositions and over 150 themes) form a body of material to be analyzed in the following chapters of this thesis.

Most of the music is contained in a Russian edition Sobranie Sochinenii [Collected Works] (Moscow: State Music Publishers, 1955-).

Compositions studied in Chapter II can be found in volumes 1 and 2 of the Collected Works; those of Chapter III in volumes 4, 5, 18, 19A, and 20A; those of Chapter IV in volume 17, and those of Chapter V in volumes 3 and 15A.

Numbers 3 and 4 of Op. 3 were omitted from this edition, therefore the following publication has been used:

Prokofiev, Sergei. Selected Works for the Piano. Compiled by Erno Balogh. New York/London: G. Schirmer [n.d.] Vol. 1766, pp. 22-25.

Instead of volumes 2, 4, 5 and 15A of the Collected Works, which are missing from the University of Alberta's library, the following scores have been examined:

1. Prokofiev, Sergei. Complete Piano Sonatas. New York: Leeds Music Corporation, c 1957.
2. Prokofiev, Sergei. Ala et Lolly; Suite Scythe pour grande orchestra, Op. 20. London: Boosey & Hawkes, c 1923. (Hawkes pocket scores, No. 636).
3. Prokofiev, Sergei. Klavierkonzert No. 1, Des-Dur. Piano

Concerto in D flat major, Op. 10. Bad Godesberg: Rob. Forberg [n.d.] (Pub. pl. No. 6205).

3. Transliteration and Translation of Russian

In this thesis, a good number of book titles, names and quotations from sources written in Russian are cited. The transliteration of a Cyrillic alphabet into a Roman one follows a simplified version of a system employed by the Library of Congress.

A table for such transliteration can be found in the following book: Demar Irvine, Writing about Music: A Style Book for Reports and Theses, 2nd ed. (Seattle/London: University of Washington Press, 1968), pp. 41-42.

Common-usage modified spelling was preferred for transcribing well-known names and titles. (For example: Musorgsky rather than Musorgskii; Prokofiev rather than Prokof'ev, etc.)

In cases where an English-language edition of the text cited in this thesis was not available, the author's own translation from Russian into English has been supplied.

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CHAPTER I

PROKOFIEV'S EARLY PERIOD--A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

The following short biographical sketch of Prokofiev's early period as well as all other biographical information found throughout this thesis are based on data given in I. Nestyev's book, Prokofiev.[14]

Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev was born on April 23, 1891, in the small Ukrainian village of Sontsovka. His father, an agronomist, worked there as supervisor of the village's economic affairs, and his mother helped in all administrative matters, even functioning as a doctor and teacher of peasant children. Prokofiev's parents were representative of the middle-class Russian intelligentsia. They were both well educated, and Mrs. Prokofiev was a good pianist and pedagogue. It was she who first introduced little Sergei to music. She taught him the three basic skills, which proved to become important factors in Sergei's musical career:

1. to judge and analyze music
2. to play the piano
3. to write his own music.

Between the ages of six and eight, Sergei composed several piano pieces. The next year (after his unforgettable visits to opera houses in Moscow) he wrote his first opera, The Giant. By the time he was thirteen and ready to enter St. Petersburg Conservatory, he had completed four operas, a symphony, two sonatas, songs and many piano compositions. The later works of this childhood period were written under the supervision of Reinhold Gliere, who had become Prokofiev's first private composition teacher.

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[14] Israel Nestyev, Prokofiev, 2nd ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960), 528.

Of the early piano compositions, the little pieces called Ditties deserve special attention. They were composed for and dedicated to Sergei's relatives and friends. From 1902 to 1906 five series of Ditties were written, each consisting of twelve pieces composed within one year. Manuscripts of these sixty miniatures have been preserved in the Prokofiev archives in the U.S.S.R. They present challenging material for scholarly study. Not only do they show a development of Prokofiev's creative thinking but they are also direct links to all the musical output which has followed.[15]

During the Conservatory years (1904-1914), in spite of his conflicts with teachers, whose teaching methods Prokofiev disliked, he acquired necessary skills in all music-theory subjects. He completed a course in conducting and under the guidance of his piano teacher, Anna Yesipova, grew into one of the great and individual pianists of his time.

At the Conservatory, Prokofiev made lifelong friends with musicians Boris Asafyev and Nikolai Myaskovsky, and the musical discussions with the latter were of especially great benefit to his artistic development.

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[15] I. Nestyev mentions that hints of one of the future themes of Sarcasm No. 1 are contained in Ditty No. 8 of the 1903 series, and that the Ditties of 1904 precede the Études, Op. 2 and themes of the First Piano Concerto, Op. 10. The best of the last Ditties of 1905 and 1906 contain germ ideas of themes of such late works as Romeo and Juliet and War and Peace. See Nestyev, Prokofiev, pp. 13, 15 and 22, respectively.

In 1907, Prokofiev became involved in the activities of a modernist musical society, Evenings of Modern Music, where he got acquainted with the latest Russian and West European music, and where his own compositions were first performed. (In 1910, at one of those gatherings, he first met Igor Stravinsky.)

Prokofiev's compositions, written during the first half of his studies at the Conservatory, include six piano sonatas, a symphony in E minor,[16] two new versions of his childhood opera Undine, a new version of another early opera, A Feast in Time of Plague, songs and piano pieces.

A revised first movement of the Second Piano Sonata, composed in 1907, was the first of Prokofiev's works to be assigned an opus number--First Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 1.[17] Some of the separate piano compositions written during the Conservatory years remained unpublished, while others were included in Opp. 3 and 4. The Four Études for piano, Op. 2 and the Sinfonietta, Op. 5 were written in Sontsovka during the summer holidays of 1909. In the course of the 1909-1910 season, Prokofiev added three orchestral pieces to the list of his works: Dreams, symphonic poem for orchestra, Op. 6, Two Poems for women's voices and orchestra, Op. 7 and Autumnal Sketch for orchestra, Op. 8. Next followed Two Songs for voice and piano, Op. 9, composed to words by A. Apukhtin and K. Balmont (1910-1911).

Up to this point, the music of young Prokofiev was strongly rooted in the romantic past and partly imitative of his idols of that day.

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[16] The Andante movement of this symphony was later reworked and included in the Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29.

[17] Materials of the Third Piano Sonata (1907) and the Fifth Piano Sonata (1908) served as a basis for the later Third Piano Sonata, Op. 28 and Fourth Piano Sonata Op. 29, respectively.

Influences on Prokofiev by Medtner, Rakhmaninov, Rubinstein, Skriabin and Schumann have been pointed out by several musicologists. Among the compositions showing a path to the future are the Piano pieces of Opp. 2, 3 and 4.

During the following years of great changes of fashions in art,[18] and a very tense political situation in Russia, Prokofiev's artistic style crystallized.

In 1911, he wrote the First Piano Concerto, Op. 10, which was performed at a public symphony concert, and in the same year his music was published for the first time. He obviously started to gain fame, even though mostly through extremely unfavourable criticisms of his music.

Prokofiev's first more-or-less mature opera, Maddalena, Op. 13 (1911, revised in 1913), on the text by M. Lieven, was considered very harsh, vocally difficult and unmelodious. It was never performed. The operatic style of Prokofiev's early period was very dramatic, consisting mostly of recitatives, and there can be found some similarities with the operatic achievements of M. Musorgsky.

The style of Prokofiev's piano compositions also became more dramatic and energetic; percussiveness, rhythmic drive and original harmonic treatment were among the characteristic features. These qualities can be found in the Toccata, Op. 11 (1912), in some of the Ten Pieces for piano, Op. 12 (1906-13), in the first, second and fourth movements of the Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14 (1912), in most of the music of the Second Piano Concerto, Op. 16 (1913) and in the Sarcasms, Op. 17 (1912-14).

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[18] The prominent trends in arts were futurism, cubism, idealism and mysticism. In music, principles of constructivism and primitivism stood side by side with a tendency to imitate French impressionism. Igor Stravinsky was a leading exponent of modernism in Russian music, and his influence on Prokofiev cannot be denied in works like the Scythian Suite and The Buffoon.

The one-movement Ballade for cello and piano, Op. 15 (1912) is of a similar nature. The main theme of the Ballade was Prokofiev's earliest melody to become published, written in Sontsovka in 1903 for an early violin sonata. The main theme of the Ballade is not, however, the only lyrical melody represented in Prokofiev's early compositions. Many simple, "classical", and emotional themes are heard in the Ten Pieces, Op. 12, and more often in the later works, such as the Song cycles of Opp. 18 and 27, the First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, the Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, the Third and Fourth Piano Sonatas, Opp. 28 and 29 and in the Classical Symphony (No. 1), Op. 25.

It does not seem strange that many different and sometimes quite contradictory trends are found in the music of this very young composer, whose talent and individuality were as great as was his desire to find his place in the musical life of the day. J. Kremlev makes the following observations:

> The aesthetic aspirations of Prokofiev in 1914 thus were diverse and in many aspects controversial. He valued clear simplicity of old classics but at the same time he strove for extreme audacity of innovation... He was attracted towards the Russian national element, but did not advance consistent and conscious bearing on folklore. He vaguely sensed that one ought to write for a wide audience but at the same time rejoiced at any opportunity to astound and to shock by employing the unusual. He repeatedly felt the need for lyricism but demonstratively supressed these feeble impulses impelled by the pathos of iconoclasm.[19]

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[19] Juli Kremlev, Esteticheskie vzgliady S. S. Prokofieva [The Aesthetics of S. S. Prokofiev] (Moscow: Muzyka, 1966), p. 45.

In 1913 Prokofiev went abroad for the first time. He spent his vacations in England and France. He was excited by the musical life in foreign countries and acquired a real passion for travelling. His creative horizon broadened.

In the spring of 1914 he graduated from the Conservatory with highest honours, and in the same year the doors of important concert organizations started to open for performances of his works.

The promising beginning of Prokofiev's career was, however, darkened by the outbreak of the First World War. Prokofiev was an artist; he did not care for politics. He tried not to think about war and instead became immersed in other activities--namely in the gatherings of a St. Petersburg's literary-philosophical circle, and more composing. This attitude does not seem so very unnatural to anyone but Soviet authorities. When after the end of the war Prokofiev--wanting "to breathe fresh air"--left the country for America, his move was judged as follows:

> Prokofiev, failing to comprehend the grandeur of what was taking place in his motherland, set out to win world fame and remained for a long time cut off from the soil that had nourished him. Only on returning to his native land in the early thirties did he see open before him the path to a great realistic art imbued with progressive ideals.[20]

Between the years 1914-1918, before Prokofiev left Russia, he completed some of his most interesting compositions, among them his important large-scale works--the Scythian Suite, Op. 20, the ballet The Buffoon, Op. 21, the opera The Gambler, Op. 24, the Classical Symphony, Op. 25 and the cantata Seven, They are Seven, Op. 30.

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[20] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 166.

With some exceptions, the music of this period is very dissonant and bold in its treatment of harmony, tonality, rhythm and orchestral texture.[21]

At the close of this chapter, let us cite some of I. Nestyev's very sharp observations of the stylistic features of Prokofiev's early music:

> Prokofiev's music is an unusual combination of the simple and the complex--simple, well-defined rhythms combined with fresh, pungent harmonies, impeccable classical form and texture with daring invention... He created his own distinctive melodic design, in which simplicity of line is combined with unusual twists and angularities, and his own harmonic idiom, in which transparently diatonic harmonies (much like old folk harmonies) alternate with sharp polytonality... The acute contradictions of the times nourished an undeniable dualism in Prokofiev's stylistic tendencies.
>
> Prokofiev's lyricism--restrained and chaste, free of exaggerated sentiment and superficial pathos--sounded strange and unfamiliar to many people... In addition to this lyricism, Prokofiev's best works sparkle with wholesome and infectious humor, which ranges from good-natured smiles to biting sarcasms... It is somewhat surprising that the majority of the critics failed to recognize Prokofiev's lyrical gifts, noting in his music only crude impulsiveness or bitter mockery.[22]

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[21] Without a doubt, Prokofiev's acquaintance with Sergei Diaghilev, an impresario of a famous Russian ballet company operating in Western Europe, had some influence on his tastes and musical ideas. Out of the collaboration with Diaghilev arose the Scythian Suite, Op. 20, based on rejected music for a ballet Ala and Lolli and the ballet The Buffoon, Op. 21. These two works, together with the cantata Seven, They are Seven, Op. 30, represent a trend towards primitivism in Prokofiev's music.

[22] Nestyev, Prokofiev, pp. 160-164.

CHAPTER II

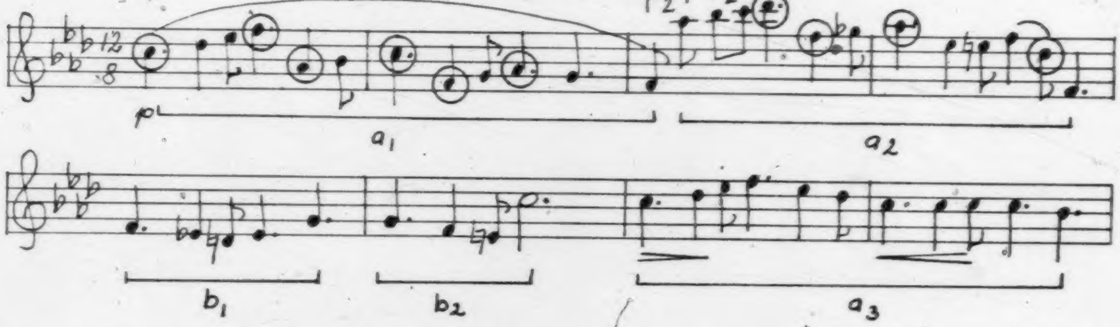
THEMES OF WORKS FOR PIANO SOLO

First Piano Sonata, Opus 1 (1907-1909)

The First Piano Sonata consists of a single allegro movement taken from an early Second Sonata of 1907. This movement was revised in 1909 and assigned the first opus number.

The style of this sonata is post-romantic; the form is a traditional sonata-allegro. The movement contains three themes which are somewhat similar in construction. They all consist of several four-measure phrases, and retain a common meter of 12/8. The rhythm is quite regular, the dotted quarter establishing a basic beat. The melodic movement is predominantly stepwise. The tonality of the first theme is F minor, while the second and third themes are in the relative A-flat major. A sequential treatment is common to all three themes, serving mainly as a modulatory device.

Theme I is shortest of the three. It consists of eight measures.



Example 1. First Piano Sonata, Op. 1, Theme I, ms. 5-12.

An opening two-measure phrase (a_1) is repeated sequentially (with modifications) a minor sixth higher (a_2). The sequential technique is also employed in the inner construction of this short phrase. (The sequential pattern is marked by the brackets above the staff.) Then follows a one-measure motive (b_1) repeated a second higher with a changed ending (b_2). A modified version of the opening phrase (a_3) concludes the theme.

The melodic movement is mostly stepwise and diatonic, the seconds being the prominent intervals. A range of almost two octaves is covered.

The modulatory sequences are responsible for changes of a tonal center throughout the theme: ms. 5-6: F (based on an Aeolian form of the scale), ms. 7-8: D-flat, m. 9: E-flat, m. 10: C, ms. 11-12: F or A-flat (ambiguous).

Triads are implied not by successive tones of the melody but by the tones of the main beats. For example, the outer tones of the sequence in the opening phrase (ms. 5-6, see circled notes) encompass the tonic triad.

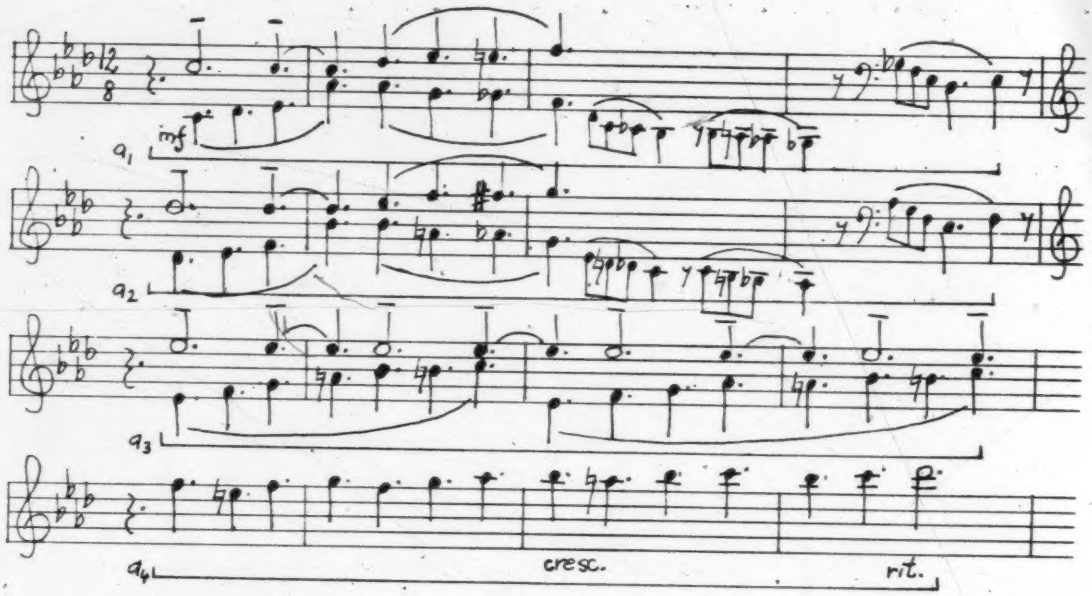
Besides the established basic beat of dotted quarters, a figure ♩ ♪ is the most conspicuous rhythmic pattern.

Comparing the sequences a_1 and a_2, and b_1 and b_2, the rhythmic modifications in the latter phrases are definitely more significant than the melodic ones.

The phrasing creates a 2+2+2+2 (or 4+2+2) pattern rather than the traditional division into two four-measure phrases (4+4).

Soft dynamics, a lack of accents, and legato touch complement the lyricism of this melody.

Theme II is contrapuntal. It consists of four four-measure phrases.

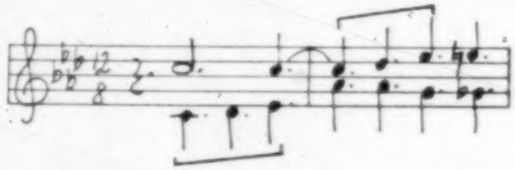


Example 2. First Piano Sonata, Op. 1, Theme II, ms. 41-55.

The top voice is prominent in the first half of the theme, the lower voice in the third phrase, and finally, both melodies merge into one line that brings a climax of the whole.

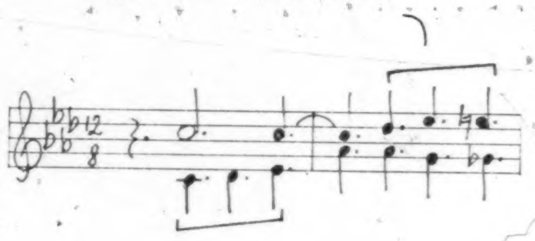
The melody covers a wide range of three full octaves.

The first half of the opening phrase (a_1) presents two-part counterpoint in oblique and contrary motions. Imitation is used between voices:



Example 3. First Piano Sonata, Op. 1, Theme II, ms. 41-42.

Regarding the rhythmic placement of the tones within measures, one can also find "a sequential imitation":



Example 4. First Piano Sonata, Op. 1, Theme II, ms. 41-42.

The second half of phrase a_1 is a continuation of the secondary material in the lower voice (a kind of a short interlude) that introduces a rhythmic figure of three consecutive eight notes.

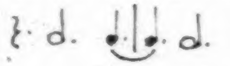
Phrase a_2 brings an exact sequential repetition of a_1 a semitone higher.

Phrase a_3 starts as another sequence a whole-step higher but its continuation is modified. It consists of two identical halves. The scale progression in the lower voice gains a superiority over the repeated syncopated tones in the upper part.

Phrase a_4 contains another scale passage, this time in unison and ornamented by neighbouring tones.

The overall tonal center of this theme is A-flat. The chromatic tones do not obscure the tonality as they always function as nonharmonic tones.

Seconds, more often minor than major, are the prominent intervals.

Rhythmically, two patterns become prominent: a group of three eighth-notes and a syncopated pattern of  etc., which underlies the whole theme.

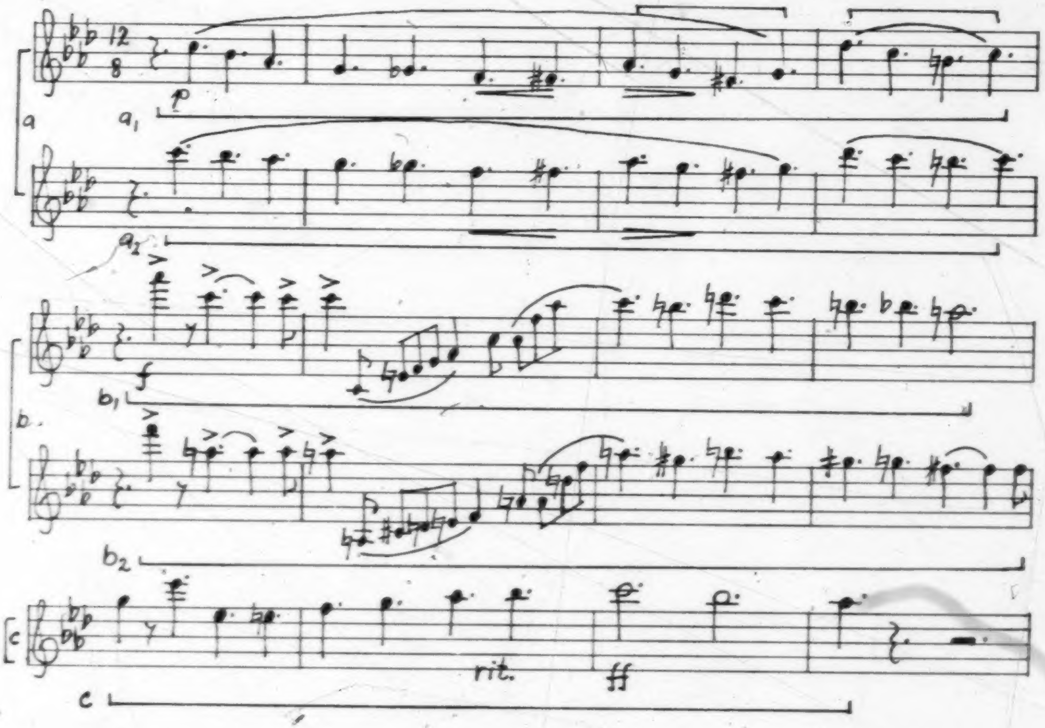
The regular phrasing of Theme II is shown in the following scheme:

$$\underbrace{2+2}\ \underbrace{2+2}\ \underbrace{2+2}\ \underbrace{2+2}$$

$$\underbrace{4\ +\ 4}\quad \underbrace{4\ +\ 4}$$

[illegible] + 8

Accented syncopations, louder dynamics (mezzo-forte followed by a crescendo in a_4), and a steady pulsation of dotted quarters make the second theme sound heavier than the first one. This is a somewhat unusual relationship between the first and second themes in sonata form.



Example 5. First Piano Sonata, Op. 1, Theme III, ms. 72-91.

Theme III can be subdivided into three parts. There are two distinct thematic ideas (a and b), each eight measures long, and a four-measure extension (c) that forms a conclusion to the exposition section.

The phrasing scheme follows: $\underbrace{4+4}\ \underbrace{4+4}$

$$8 + 8 + 4$$

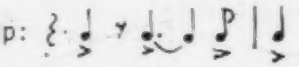
The first phrase (a_1) is four measures long and it appears transposed an octave upwards in the adjacent phrase (a_2). There is an inner sequence formed in the third and fourth measures of these phrases.

Part b consists also of two phrases. This time, the b_2 brings a sequence a minor third below the original (b_1).

Extension c consists of one phrase only, which ends the whole theme by a firm cadence in A-flat major.

The overall tonality of Theme III oscillates between F minor and A-flat major.

Several features, common to both the second and third themes, are apparent: a stepwise melody-line which includes a good number of chromatic passing tones, a great range (Theme II--thirty-six semitones, Theme III--thirty-five semitones), and two common rhythmic ideas--the dotted quarter rest at the beginning of each phrase and the group of three eighth notes which provide "a secondary contrapuntal voice" or a kind of "filling" between the more important melody-notes.

However, part b of the third theme introduces a new conspicuous rhythmic group: 

Still greater contrast between phrases a and b of Theme III is provided by the subito change of dynamics (from piano to forte). This effect is supported by a change of touch from legato to nonlegato.

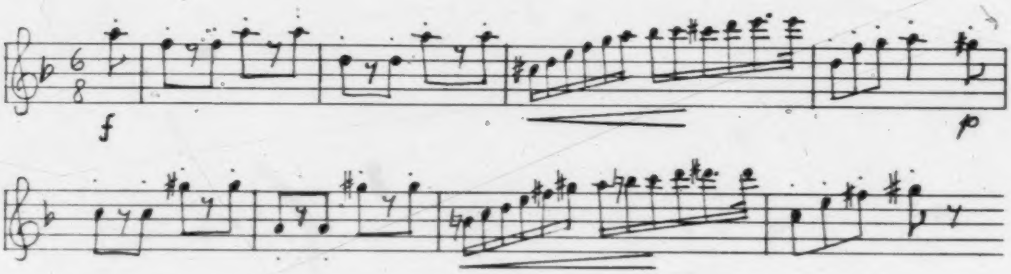
The accents help to establish a gradation in the three themes: Theme I--no accents, Theme II--accents of the first degree (-), Theme III--accents of the second degree (>).

Four Études for Piano, Opus 2 (1909)

The Four *Études* "clearly reflect his [Prokofiev's] predilection for a brilliant and powerful virtuoso style."[23]

1. Allegro

The first etude in D minor is a study in broken chords. It features a single theme consisting of two regular four-measure phrases. In the course of the composition, the theme appears in five modified versions.



Example 6. Four *Études* for Piano, Op. 2, No. 1, Theme, ms. 6-14.

The first phrase brings a broken tonic triad followed by a D harmonic minor scale. The answering phrase consists of a minor-major seventh chord on the dominant (A), and an A melodic minor scale. The second phrase sounds almost like a sequence. The rhythm of the two phrases is identical. The prominent rhythmic pattern is ♪𝄾♪. Rests add a pungent staccato quality. Even the scale passages are marked non-legato.

The melodic range is nineteen semitones. The tonal center of the first phrase is D, that of the second phrase is A. The loud dynamics (forte) of the first phrase are followed by a subito piano in the second phrase.

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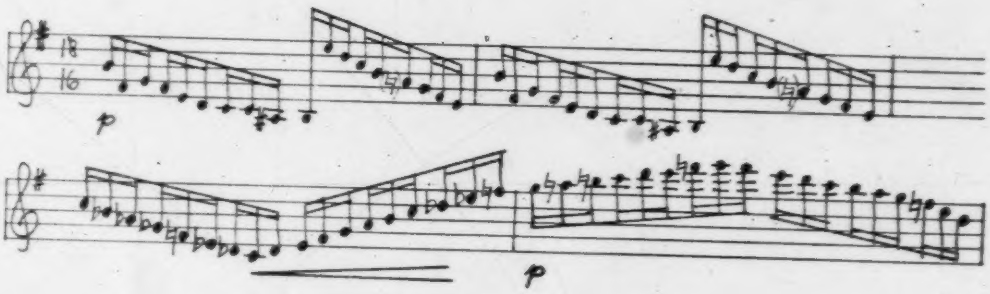
[23] Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, p. 37.

(The subsequent variations of the main theme bring several new features. The melodic range is extended up to twenty-six semitones. The interval of the tritone becomes prominent when the theme appears in a whole-tone setting. A broken augmented triad is featured in the melodic line. New scale formations occur, namely the Aeolian mode, whole-tone scale, and a scale alternating minor seconds with minor thirds.)

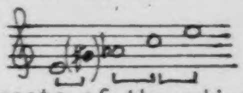
2. Moderato

The second etude in E minor is a study in scales and cross-rhythms. It contains three themes. Theme I is written in 18/16 meter, while Themes II and III (and also all the accompaniment of Theme I!) are in 4/4 time.

Theme I consists entirely of scales. It is four measures long.



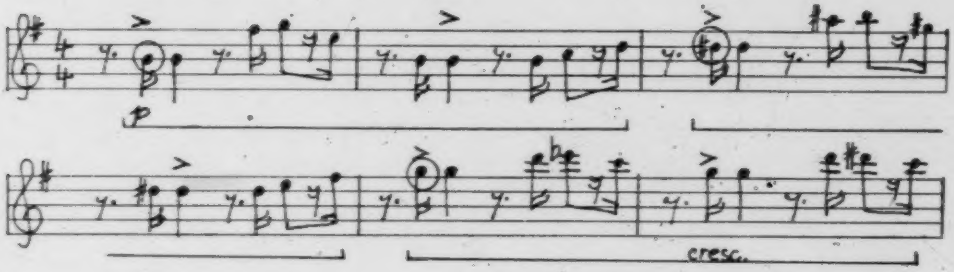
Example 7. Four Études for Piano, Op. 2, No. 2, Theme I, ms. 1-4.

This rhythmically shapeless idea is rich in its melodic and harmonic content. It begins in E minor (ms. 1-2; an Aeolian form of the scale is used, the A-sharp representing the leading tone of the dominant), then passes through a Mixolydian mode on A-flat (m. 3)[24] and a C major scale (m. 4), returning back to E minor at the beginning of the following measure. The implied roots of this progression are as follows:  The relationship of major thirds between implied roots of the adjoining harmonies is prominent in the whole study.

The range of Theme I is thirty-three semitones. The dynamics are soft (piano) with a slight crescendo in the middle. Nonlegato touch is used.

Theme II is six measures long. It consists of a two-measure phrase and two sequences, the second sequence being modified. The sequences are based again on the relationship of major thirds:

$\underbrace{\text{B, D-sharp}}_{\text{M 3}}\ \text{(}\underbrace{\text{E-flat), G}}_{\text{M 3}}$



Example 8. Four *Études* for Piano, Op. 2, No. 2, Theme II, ms. 17-22.

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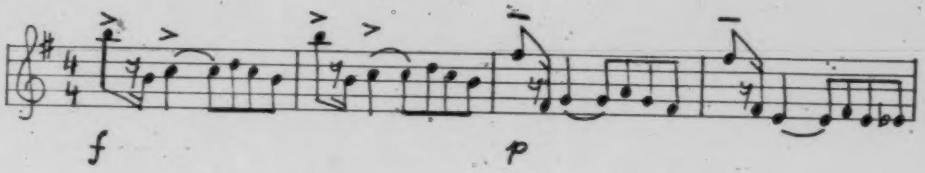
[24] The Mixolydian form of the scale on A-flat is used because it contains all the members of a dominantic seventh chord on A-flat. This seventh chord resolves in the manner of an augmented sixth chord (A-flat, C, E-flat=D-sharp, G-flat=F-sharp) into the following implied harmony of C major.

Theme II, in contrast to Theme I, is strongly rhythmic but very repetitive. It features dotted patterns interspersed with many rests. The rhythm of the first measure is repeated exactly in all subsequent measures. The placing of accents alternately on the sixteenth notes and the following quarters is noteworthy.

The range of Theme II is much narrower than that of Theme I--sixteen semitones. A tonic triad is outlined in the first measure of the theme. The dynamics are soft, and nonlegato touch is used.

Theme III is four measures long.



Example 9. Four Etudes for Piano, Op. 2, No. 2, Theme III, ms. 37-40.

This theme keeps the dotted patterns of Theme II but new groups of four even eighth notes smoothen the overall rhythmic pulsation. All four measures of Theme III are rhythmically identical.

Melodically, the second measure brings an exact repetition of the first one, and the subsequent two measures are variations on this one-measure idea. The range is twenty semitones and an octave leap becomes the prominent interval. The tonal center fluctuates between E, G and B.

This theme contains a subito change of dynamics (forte to piano) in its middle. Accents stress both the strong beats of the measure and the following syncopated weak beats.

3. Andante semplice

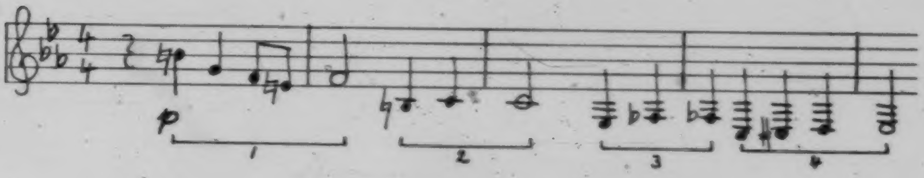
The third etude in C minor is the longest and weightiest of the four. This highly contrapuntal composition in rubato style features three distinct themes. All the themes are chromatic and they are often combined together, so that a very thick polyphonic texture results. The time signature is a constant 4/4 meter but many changes of speed, both sudden and gradual, occur frequently.

All three themes begin on weak beats and consist of irregular phrases:

Theme I -- four measures plus one incomplete measure
Theme II -- seven measures plus one incomplete measure
Theme III -- four complete measures, but not coinciding with the bar-lines.

Nonlegato touch is another common trait of all three themes.

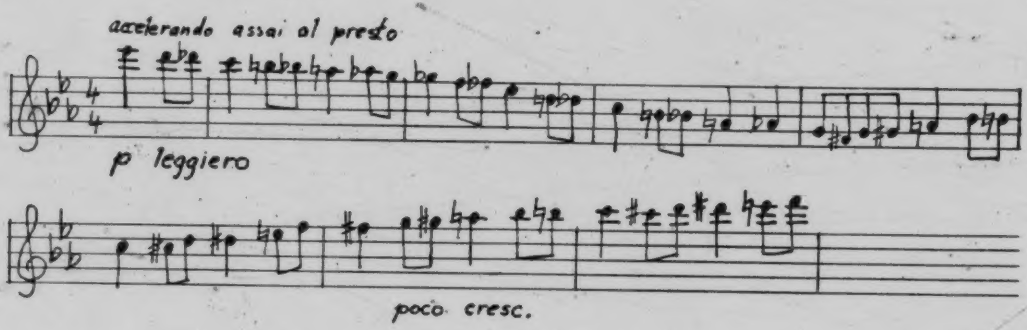
A slow, broad Theme I opens the composition.



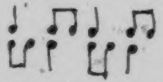
Example 10. Four Études for Piano, Op. 2, No. 3, Theme I, ms. 1-5.

This theme contains four motives, in all of which a stepwise chromatic movement predominates. A resemblance to sequential treatment can be found in the construction of these motives. The chromatic tones do not obscure the main tonality of C minor, however. The underlying scale may be either the harmonic or melodic form of C minor, since the sixth degree is missing. The range is twenty-three semitones. The dynamics are soft (piano).

The leggiero second theme is marked accelerando assai al presto, the presto being reached at the beginning of the theme's successive restatement. The dynamics increase accordingly.

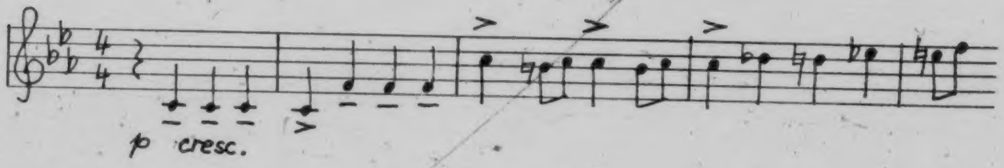


Example 11. Four Études for Piano, Op. 2, No. 3, Theme II, ms. 14-21.

Theme II consists of a first descending and then ascending chromatic scale which is doubled in thirds below. The tonal center of this theme is C. The rhythm brings a repetitive pattern of ♩ ♫. The rhythmic scheme of the lower contrapuntal voice is reversed, so that a steady pulsation of eighth notes results:  etc.

The range of theme II is identical with that of Theme I (twenty-three semitones) but a higher register of the piano is used.

Theme III is a robust accented melody, reminiscent of baroque fugal themes.



Example 12. Four Études for Piano, Op. 2, No. 3, Theme III, ms. 54-58.

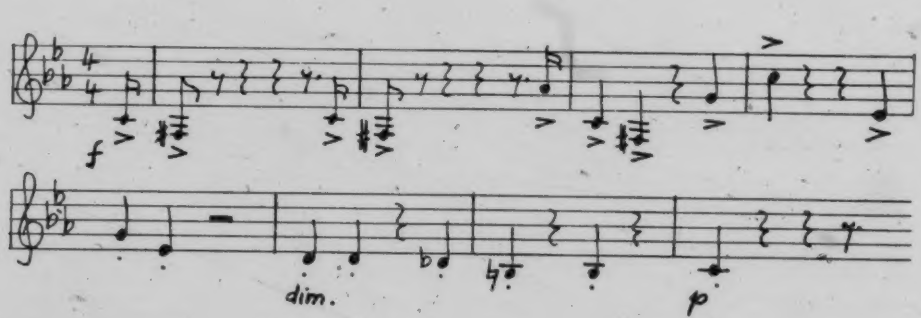
(The theme is followed by a "real answer" a perfect fourth higher and later combined with the other two themes in a lengthy section which resembles a fugal development.)

The range of Theme III is fifteen semitones. Repetition of the same pitch is a fundamental principle of construction of this theme. The tonal center is F-- the subdominant of the main tonality of C minor. Besides the repeated pitches, a stepwise chromatic movement and leaps of the perfect intervals occur in the melodic line. The rhythm brings a steady pulsation of quarter notes. Theme III uses two kinds of accents (- and >) and builds a continuous crescendo.

4. Presto energico

The fourth etude in C minor is an exercise in various pianistic skills. The staccato touch, dotted rhythms and accented skipping lines suggest the style of Prokofiev's Marches which were to follow. The speed is fast and invariable. The 4/4 meter and regular phrases constructed of an even number of measures emphasize the typical quality of "squareness" in Prokofiev's music.

The composition contains two eight-measure themes. The chordal Theme I outlines the following melody in the top voice:



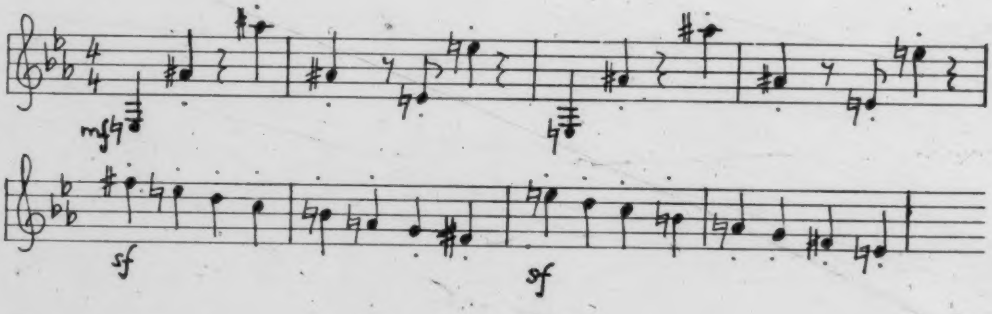
Example 13. Four Études for Piano, Op. 2, No. 4, Theme I, ms. 3-11.

This theme is obviously in C minor. It starts with a recurrent tritone leap, C to F-sharp. The F-sharp can be viewed in two perspectives: as a leading tone of the dominant (to which it finally resolves in the third full measure) or as a part of a Hungarian scale on C (C, D, E-flat, F-sharp, G, A-flat, B-natural, C) which could be a basis of the whole theme. A C minor triad is outlined in the two middle measures of the theme. The range is eighteen semitones.

The many rests in this theme seem to be as important as the notes. They separate the notes into small motives.

The loud dynamics (forte) decrease towards the end of the theme. All notes of the loud portion are accented. Staccato touch prevails.

Theme II enters in E minor.



Example 14. Four Études for Piano, Op. 2, No. 4, Theme II, ms. 28-35.

The relationship between the roots of Theme I and Theme II is that of a major third. Several similarities between the two themes are apparent. Their opening phrases consist of leaps which include a tritone, while the subsequent phrases bring descending steps. The rhythmic motive 𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅮 of Theme I is augmented into 𝅘𝅥𝅮𝅘𝅥 in Theme II, and the rhythm of 𝅘𝅥 𝅘𝅥 𝄽 𝅘𝅥 becomes a characteristic pattern of both themes. However, the second half of Theme II establishes a new rhythmic pulsation consisting of regular quarter notes. The first two measures of this phrase contain a stepwise descending progression based on the Aeolian mode on E. The subsequent pair of measures is a sequence a whole step lower. The leaping first phrase features intervals of the tritone and octave. The overall range of Theme II is thirty semitones. The dynamics are medium loud (mezzo-forte) and a strong accent, sforzato, is used twice in the second phrase of the theme. Staccato touch is solely used.

Four Pieces for Piano, Opus 3 (1907-1908)

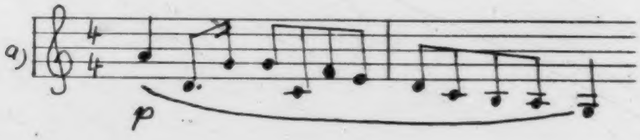
(The Four Pieces were revised in 1911.)

1. Fairy Tale

"A varicolored succession of fantastic pictures forms the content of Fairy Tale. The principal theme of this piece is in the typical diatonic harmony--'on the white keys'--that later became Prokofiev's favorite harmonic idiom."[25]

The piece starts and ends in the key of C major but there is much tonal fluctuation and modal writing which border on atonality. The time signature is a constant 4/4 time and a slow tempo is used.

The composition contains two short themes.



Example 15a. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 3, No. 1, Theme I, ms. 1-2.

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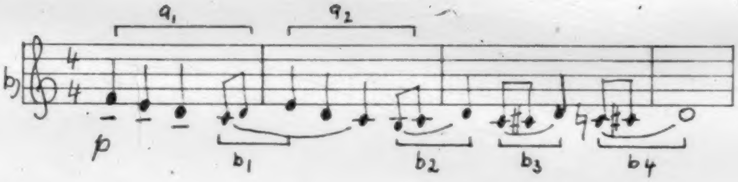
[25] Nestyev, Prokofiev, pp. 32-33.



Example 15b. Four pieces for Piano, Op. 3, No. 1, Theme II, ms. 4-7.

A tendency to obscure tonality can be seen in the construction of both of these melodies. Their common implied root is C but neither of them begins or ends with this tone.

Theme I consists of a single two-measure phrase. A sequential progression of descending fifths opens this exclusively diatonic melody. The pitch range is fourteen semitones. With the exception of the opening quarter note followed by a dotted pattern, the rhythm contains regular movement of eighth notes. Soft dynamics (piano) and legato touch are used.

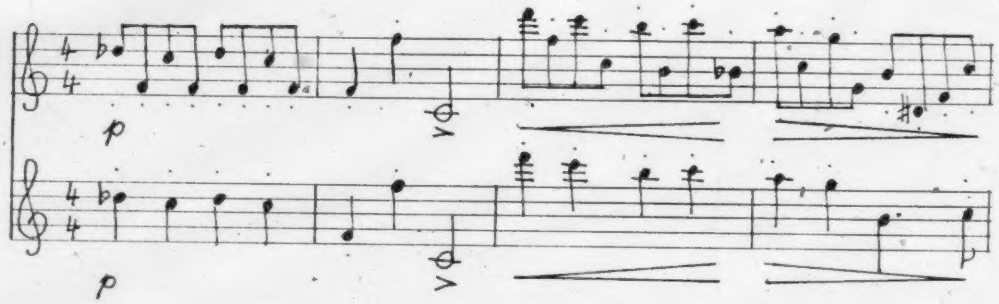
Theme II is four measures long. It also consists of a single phrase which contains sequential progressions. Two independent sequences (marked a and b in Example 15b) interlock in the melodic movement. The range of this completely stepwise melody is only six semitones. The rhythm presents an alternation of quarter notes with pairs of eighths. Tenuto signs emphasize the opening three tones, while the general dynamics remain soft (piano) for the whole theme.

2. Badinage

Badinage is a little humorous piece of regular phrases and rhythm, dissonant harmonies and angular melodic lines. The piece contains two themes, both four measures long. The speed is vivo, the meter a regular

4/4 time. The tonality of C major is confirmed by all cadences.

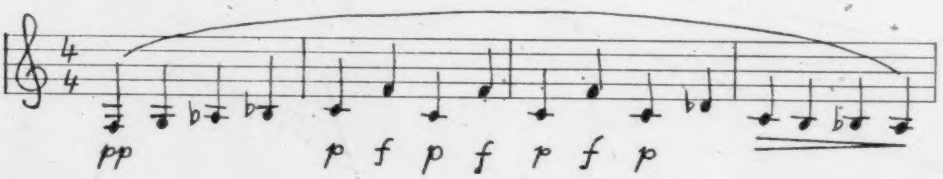
The first leaping theme contains a smoother melodic idea within it.



Example 16. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 3, No. 2, Theme I, ms. 1-4.

The theme consists of two two-measure phrases. Its range is wide (twenty-nine semitones) and the jumping character is emphasized by staccato touch. The tonal center is C. A pulsation of eighth notes prevails. The dynamics are soft in the first phrase, while the second phrase contains a crescendo followed by a decrescendo.

Theme II is built on the subdominant harmony, using a partially chromatic form of the F minor scale.



Example 17. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 3, No. 2, Theme II, ms. 11-14.

In contrast to the first theme, this melody uses legato touch and a stepwise movement predominates. In the sphere of rhythm, an uninterrupted pulsation of quarter notes is established. But again, a certain unevenness of musical thought is purposely brought out by the alternation of dynamics in the two middle measures. The basic dynamics are soft, forte marks being used instead of accents.

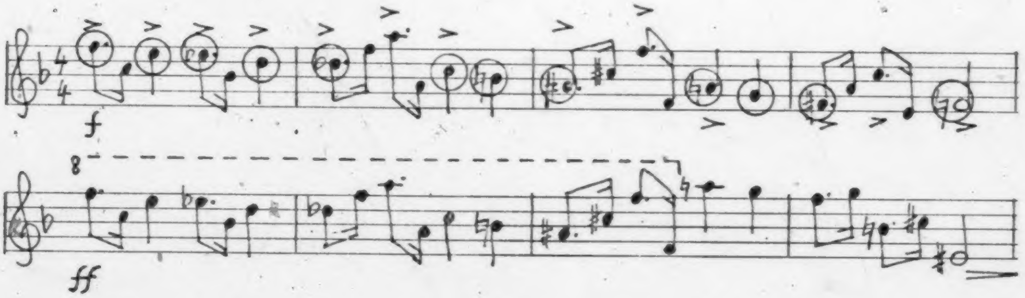
The range of Theme II is just one octave. The only intervals used are seconds and perfect fourths.

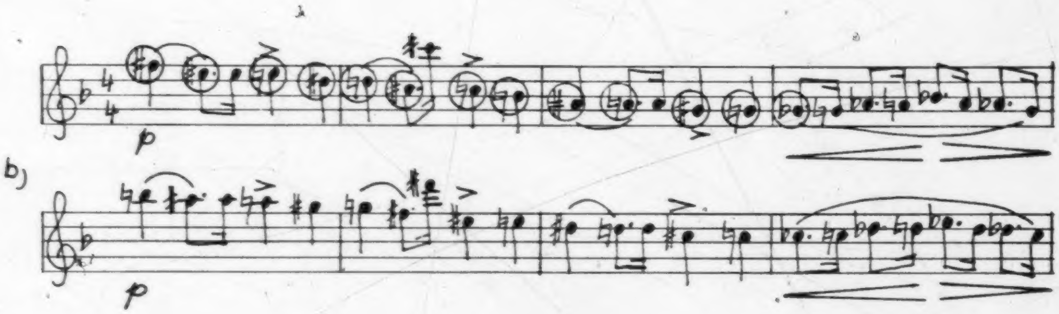
3. March

This is the first of Prokofiev's published Marches and it contains all the basic characteristics of his individual compositional style. Prokofiev's Marches are heavy with many accented beats, they abound in dotted rhythms and their phrases are very regular and square.

This particular March is a short piece which contains two four-measure themes. The time signature is 4/4, the key is F major and the speed is allegro energico. Both themes are chordal, the top voices being prominent. The tonal centers of the two themes are a tritone apart (F and B-natural, respectively). Both themes are based on the same melodic idea of a descending chromatic scale embellished by occasional skips of nonharmonic tones. (The tones of the chromatic scales are circled in the following example.)

a)



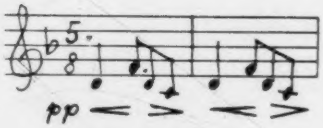


Example 18. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 3, No. 3,
a) Theme I, ms. 1-8,
b) Theme II, ms. 9-16.

Each theme consists of two equal phrases. The second phrase of Theme I repeats the melody of the first phrase an octave higher, and only the closing cadence is modified. The second phrase of Theme II is a sequence a perfect fourth above the first phrase. The range of Theme I is twenty-nine semitones, that of Theme II twenty-four semitones. Nonlegato touch is used in both melodies. The rhythm alternates dotted patterns (♫) with quarter notes. The dotted figures are placed mainly on the strong beats in Theme I, and on the weak beats in Theme II. The contrasting dynamics (forte in Theme I and piano in Theme II) provide an additional differentiation between the two themes.

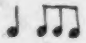
4. Fantôme

Fantôme, a subtle presto tenebroso piece in 5/8 meter, does not contain real themes. The thematic material, if any, consists of one two-measure unit and several variations on the same.



Example 19. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 3, No. 4, ms. 3-4.

This "theme" brings out the lowered seventh degree of the Aeolian mode on D. (The root D was selected on the basis of the key signature; otherwise this short phrase could be easily analyzed in other tonalities, for example in C major or F major.)

The only intervals used are the second and third. The range is five semitones. The rhythm brings a repetitive pattern of  . The dynamics are soft (pianissimo).

Four Pieces for Piano, Opus 4 (1908-1912)

The Four Pieces of Op. 4 were written as separate piano compositions during 1908. All the music was revised in 1912, prior to its publication in the present collection.

1. Reminiscence

"Listeners are still charmed by the introspective quality (so uncommon for a young composer) of *Reminiscence*...there is a feeling of tranquillity in the tuneful theme of *Reminiscence*, with its brightly colored chain of altered chords."[26]

Reminiscence is a very chromatic, contrapuntal composition. It contains two themes.

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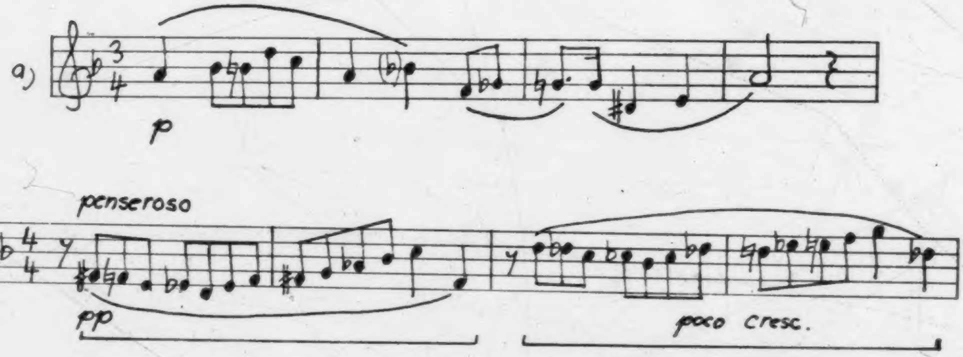
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 32.



Example 20. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4, No. 1,
a) Theme I, ms. 3-6,
b) Theme II, ms. 10-13.

Each theme is four measures long but the actual lengths differ because of the different time signatures, 3/4 and 4/4 respectively.

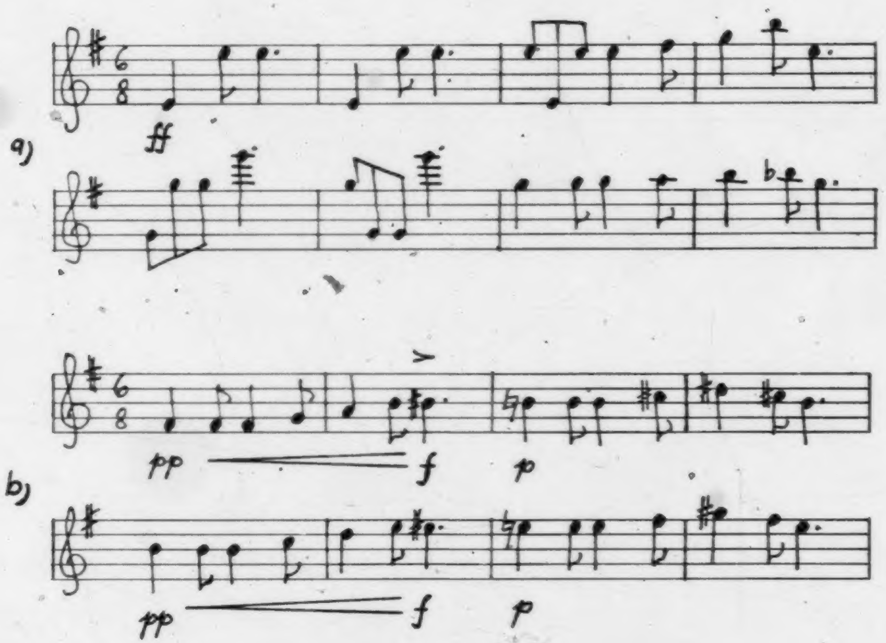
Theme I is divided into three short irregular units, while Theme II consists of two equal phrases. The second phrase of Theme II is a sequence constructed a major sixth above the first phrase.

The tonal center of both themes is F, and a chromatic scale underlies the entire melodic movement. Consequently, the prominent interval is the minor second. The range of Theme I is eleven semitones, that of Theme II seventeen semitones. The eighth notes establish a regular pulsation in Theme II, but the rhythmic design of Theme I is quite irregular. Both themes consist of legato phrases and use only soft dynamics.

2. Élan

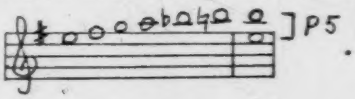
Élan is a molto allegro, toccata-like piece. It is written in steady 6/8 meter and consists of absolutely regular, four-measure phrases.

Two eight-measure themes are introduced in the main tonality of E minor.



Example 21. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4, No. 2,
a) Theme I, ms. 1-8,
b) Theme II, ms. 9-16.

Some similarities between the two themes are noticeable. First of all, the likeness of the rhythmic structure is apparent. The last two measures of Theme I create a pattern of ♩♪♩ ♪ which is further exploited in Theme II. Melodically, both themes consist of two four-measure phrases, the second phrases representing variations on the first ones. Both themes use nonlegato touch.

Differences are seen in the intervallic make-up of the melodies and in the area of dynamics. Theme I covers a greater range than Theme II (twenty-seven semitones as opposed to fourteen) and its leaping character contrasts with the stepwise progression of the second melody. However, on a detailed examination one discovers that by removing the decorative octave leaps, the melody of Theme I covers only a range of the perfect fifth: 

. This fact does not obscure

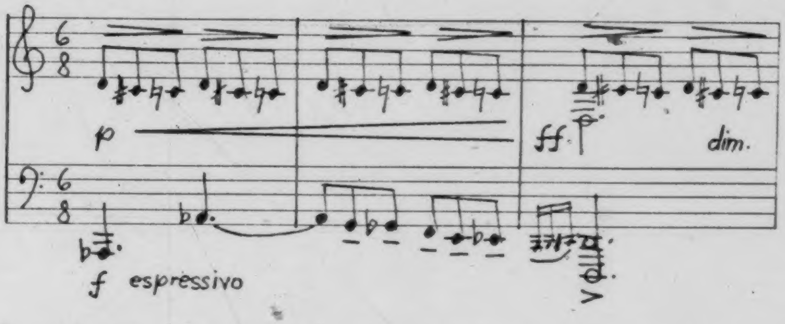
the prominence of the octave leaps in this melody, however. The other important interval of Theme I is the prime. The tonal center of the first phrase is E, that of the second phrase G. An E minor triad is outlined in the last measure of the first phrase. The dynamics are loud.

Theme II contains repeated tones and stepwise motion, so that both the prime and second become important intervals. The tonal centers of the two phrases of Theme II are B and E, respectively. It is interesting to note that all the tonal centers of the two themes correspond to the tones of the tonic triad of the overall tonality (E,G,B,E). The second phrase of Theme II brings a sequence a perfect fourth above the theme's first phrase. The dynamics range from pianissimo to forte, and subito changes of volume occur in the middle of each phrase.

3. Despair

Despair is written in 6/8 meter, as in the previous composition, but its character is entirely different. The speed indication, andante con agitazione e dolore, and the name itself give the best clues to understanding the mood of this piece. Many changes of dynamics, tonal uncertainty and abundant chromaticism bring a continuous tension into this composition. Another factor which supports the tense atmosphere is an unceasing ostinato pattern of three chromatically descending tones (D, C-sharp, C-natural) which underlies the whole piece. Since the tone D is repeated on the strong beat of every measure, and since the concluding chord of the piece consists of three D's and one A, the D can be named the overall tonal center. (There are no accidentals in the key signature.) However, there are other temporary centers established in the course of the composition, and it was indisputably the aim of the composer to obscure the tonality as much as possible.

An example of tonal instability is the first appearance of a short melody which serves as a recurring leitmotiv in the whole composition.

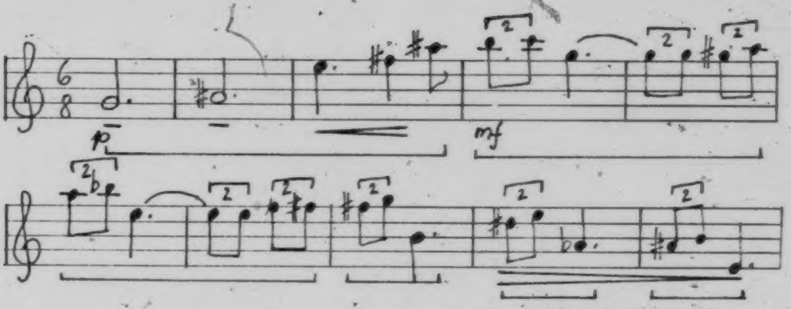


Example 22. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4, No. 3, leitmotiv, ms. 3-5.

This leitmotiv starts on A-flat (a tritone relationship to D) under the ostinato pattern. The D on top becomes an appoggiatura because the A-flat forms a stronger interval (the third) with the last note of the ostinato (C) and thus occupies the position of a temporary tonal center. This ambiguity lasts for two measures only and then the D emerges again as the root.

Despair is written in an ABA form. Each section features its own theme. The above-mentioned leitmotiv provides an introduction, connecting passages between sections and a coda. Except for its first appearance, it always occurs in two simultaneous voices in the manner of a short canon.

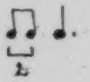
Theme I is ten measures long, and of an irregular inner structure.



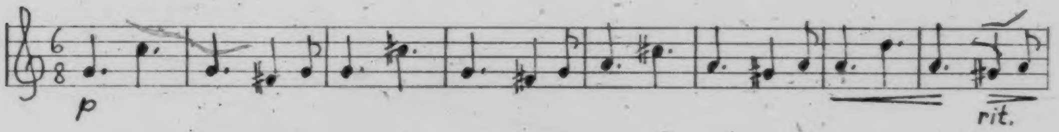
Example 23. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4, No. 3,
Theme I, ms. 7-16.

This theme is made up of several smaller phrases. The first ascending phrase is the longest one of all--three measures. The second phrase consists of two measures. Its first measure contains the most characteristic motive of the whole theme (an ascending semitone followed by a downward leap) and it also reaches its highest point, C^3.

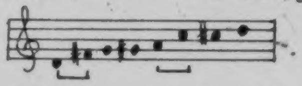
The second phrase is immediately repeated on lower pitches, then the one-measure characteristic motive is used sequentially three times, descending finally to the pitch-level of the opening.

The tritone occurs twice among the leaps. The tonal basis of this theme is a chromatic scale, and the tonal center is E. The range is twenty semitones. Duplets of eighth notes establish the rhythmic pulsation. The characteristic rhythm is  . The dynamics are soft, and nonlegato touch is used.

Theme II is of standard length (eight measures) and divides into two halves and further into four two-measure phrases.



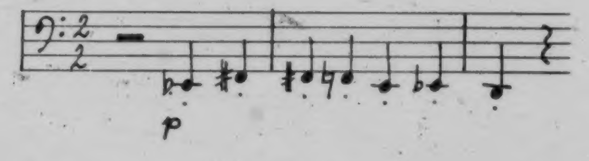
Example 24. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4, No. 3, Theme II,
ms. 43-50.

All phrases repeat the same rhythmic pattern (6/8 ♩. ♩. | ♩. ♩ ♪) and their intervallic structure is also similar. The alternation of leaps and half steps is reminiscent of Theme I. Although the tritone leap is also present here, the interval of the perfect fourth is used more often. The range of Theme II is only eight semitones. The tonal center fluctuates between C, A and D. An underlying scale contains half steps and two thirds: . Both the soft dynamics and nonlegato touch from Theme I are retained.

4. Diabolic Suggestions

Diabolic Suggestions is the most popular piece of this opus. Its name and speed indication, prestissimo fantastico, tell enough about its character. The thematic material consists of a single short motive which is developed in a series of variations.

The piece opens with a tritone pedal, F-sharp to C. ("This piece accentuates the tritone more than many. Perhaps it is a musical pun on the diabolus in musica."[27]) The tonal ambiguity created by the tritone is reinforced by the chromatic make-up of the main motive which appears above it.



Example 25. Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4, No. 4, main motive, ms. 1-3.

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[27] Patricia Ashley, "Prokofiev's Piano Music: Line, Chord, Key" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 1963), p. 61.

It is very difficult to find a tonal center here. There are many possibilities but they contradict each other. From the way the tones of the motive are spelled, the center on D can be deduced. The tonal material is based on a chromatic scale, and consequently, the prominent interval is the minor second. The range is only four semitones. Rhythmically, the motive consists of seven even quarter notes. (Both augmentation and diminution of the motive are found later in the composition.) The dynamics are soft (piano). Staccato touch is used.

Toccata, Opus 11 (1912)

It is the opinion of many that:

> in verve and intensity this [Toccata] was a direct continuation of the most brilliant piece in Op. 4, Diabolic Suggestions...The essence of a ceaseless rhythmic race is set forth in strangely fantastic tones through the use of pungent and percussive timbres, harsh suspensions, and contrapuntal devices...This predominance of motor images, of pure rhythm over melos, we shall also encounter many times in Prokofiev's later toccata-like works...[28]

Strangely enough, the Toccata is very linear in its construction, but the thematic material simply lacks the qualifications to be called "a tune." It consists mainly of repeated notes, broken chords and passages of chromatic scales. However, these structures do create conspicuous and coherent themes that present much more material for melodic analysis than the Diabolic Suggestions.

Toccata contains four melodic ideas. The first one is associated with an introduction and connecting passages or interludes. This idea can be called a leitmotiv, like that in Op. 4, No. 3. It consists of repeated notes.

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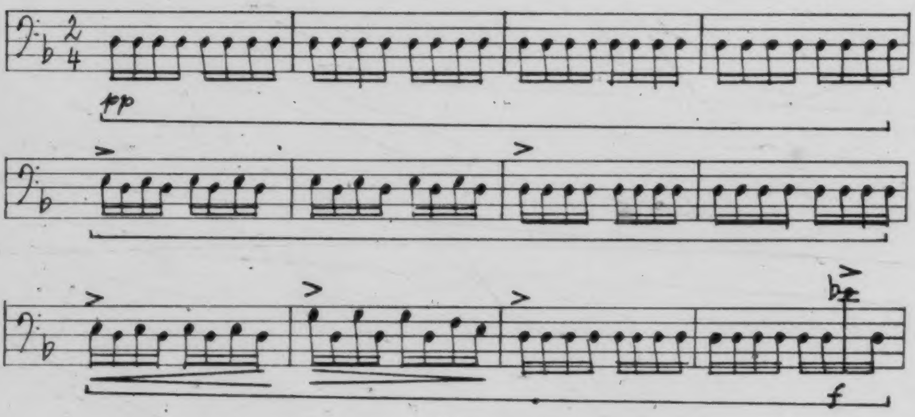
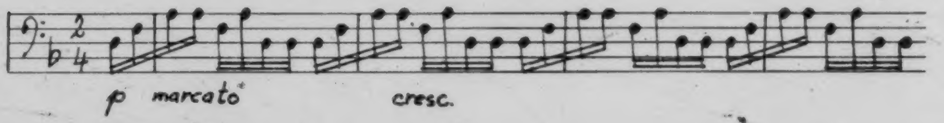
[28] Nestyev, Prokofiev, pp. 66-67.



Example 26. Toccata, Op.11 , leitmotiv, ms. 1-12.

This twelve-measure melody divides into three four-measure phrases rather than into two equal halves. The purpose of this introduction is to establish the basic rhythmic pulsation of sixteenth notes and a tonal center which is clearly a D. The range of the melody is thirteen semitones, and the prominent interval is the prime. The most often repeated tone is the tonic, D.

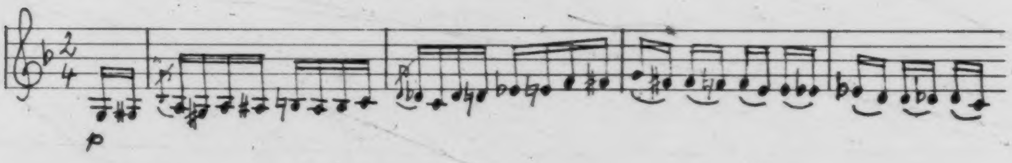
Theme I is four measures long and its melodic line consists of repeated broken tonic chords in root position. Consequently, the prime, third and perfect fifth are the only intervals used, and the range covers just a perfect fifth--seven semitones.



Example 27. Toccata, Op.11 , Theme I, ms. 24-28.

The rhythm brings a continuous movement of sixteenth notes. The cross-rhythm is not of great importance here, since none of the tones are accented and therefore this particular rhythmic grouping is not heard in performance any better than would be the grouping in connection with the regular divisions within the measure. (The accompaniment supports neither the regular pulsation nor cross-rhythm because it is written partly in the first and partly in the second manner.)

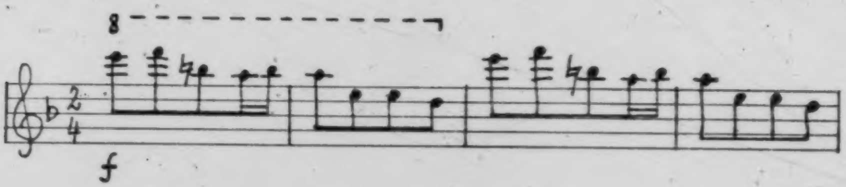
Theme II features a chromatic scale, first ascending and then descending. The scale movement is embellished by auxiliary and repeated tones.



Example 28. Toccata, Op. 11, Theme II, ms. 32-36.

The length and the rhythmic design of Theme II are identical to those of Theme I. However, no cross-rhythms are employed here. The melody covers a range of one octave. Its tonal center is G, the subdominant harmony of the overall tonality of D minor.

Theme III is also four measures long, and it consists of two two-measure phrases. The second phrase is an octave transposition of the first phrase.



Example 29. Toccata, Op. 11, Theme III, ms. 77-80.

The rhythmic pulsation consists of eighth notes. The tonal center is D. Besides the interval of the second, both the perfect fourth and tritone are used. Owing to the octave transposition of one phrase, the range of this theme is much wider than in any of the previous themes of the Toccata--twenty-seven semitones.

Comparing all four melodies of the Toccata, a curious fact emerges: Prokofiev chooses for his themes either all tones of a chromatic scale (Theme II) or confines himself only to the "white keys" (Themes I, III and leitmotiv).

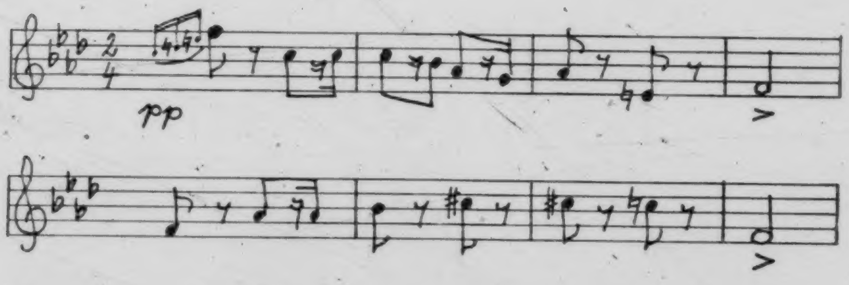
Ten Pieces for Piano, Opus 12 (1906-1913)

> The diversity of genres and styles represented here further confirms the dualism in the young Prokofiev's creative tendencies. Although strongly attracted to modernist innovations, he was still firmly tied to the classical traditions instilled in him since childhood.[29]

1. March

March consists of regular phrases (4+4), its time signature is 2/4, and the speed is allegro. It contains two eight-measure themes. The main tonality of the piece is F minor but the first theme appears twice in F-sharp minor, the key of the half-step relationship. The changes of tonality are achieved by means of abrupt shifts rather than by gradual modulations.

Theme I consists of two four-measure phrases.



Example 30. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 1, Theme I, ms. 1-8.

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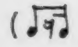
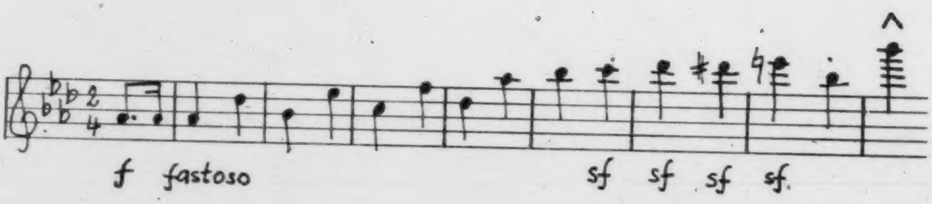
[29] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 78.

The rhythmic movement consists of dotted patterns () and eighth notes followed by eighth rests. The tonal center is F. Stepwise passages are alternated with repeated tones and small leaps. The range is thirteen semitones. The dynamics are soft (pianissimo) and staccato touch is implied.



Example 31. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 1, Theme II, ms. 32-40.

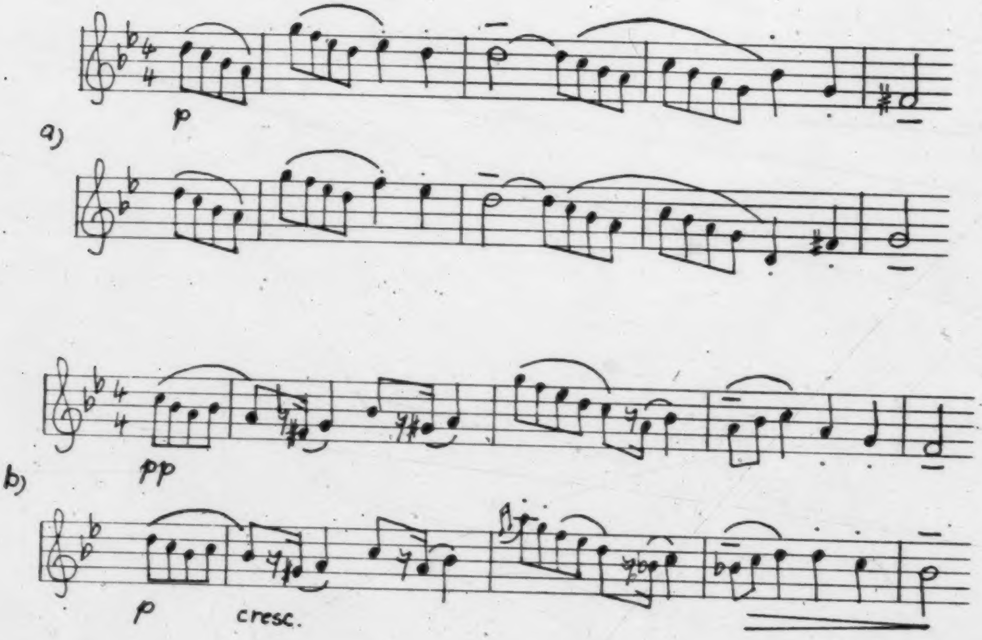
Theme II is loud (forte) and it is marked fastoso. It uses non-legato touch. Although it starts with an anacrusis of a dotted figure, its main body consists of a succession of regular quarter notes. The overall ascending melodic movement contains both leaps (the perfect fourth is repeated most often) and stepwise movement. The range is twice as wide as that of Theme I--twenty-six semitones. Theme II is found in the area of the submediant, D-flat.

2. Gavotte

Considering the overall melodic style of Prokofiev's early period, the Gavotte can be classified as an old-fashioned piece. Its melodies reveal that Prokofiev was still firmly tied to the romantic past.

An ABA form is used and the dance character of the gavotte style is preserved. The outer sections are written in the key of G minor, the middle one in G major. Each section contains one theme which is constructed in a small aba form.

Each part of Theme I is eight measures long.

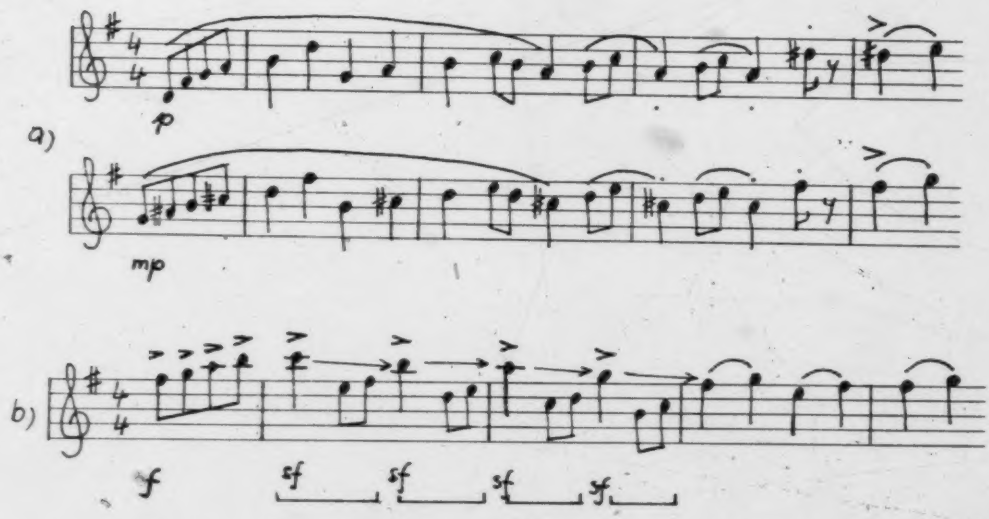


Example 32. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 2,
a) Theme Ia, ms. 1-8,
b) Theme Ib, ms. 8-16.

Both melodies stem from the same idea--alternation of groups of smooth eighth notes with staccato quarter notes. Part Ib is lightened by additional dotted-note patterns (♪𝄾♬). Each part consists of two equal phrases which are identical rhythmically. In Ia, even the melodies of its two phrases are similar. A G minor tonality is well established. The endings of the phrases differ in order to establish a tonic-to-dominant cadence in the first half, and a dominant-to-tonic cadence in the answering half. Part Ib modulates from G minor to the relative B-flat major. The modulation is prepared by the sequential progression of its second phrase. (Grace notes are added at the point of climax in measure 14.)

A stepwise, descending movement, interrupted by occasional upward leaps, is characteristic of each part of Theme I.

The two parts of Theme II differ from the two of Theme I as well as from each other. The first modulating part is very smooth and flowing, while the second one is the most robust and also shortest (four measures) of all four.



Example 33. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 2,
a) Theme IIa, ms. 24-32,
b) Theme IIb, ms. 32-36.

The second phrase of IIa is a sequence. In part IIb, small units of two beats each are treated sequentially. The real melodic progression is represented by the strong beats of the measure (see the arrows in Example 33b), while the eighth notes (the weak beats) serve as an ornamentation.

Stepwise movement prevails in both parts of Theme II. The overall tonal center is G.

In all thematic material of the Gavotte, the intervals of the second and third predominate. All the ranges are quite similar:

Ia--seventeen semitones

Ib--sixteen semitones

IIa--seventeen semitones

IIb--thirteen semitones.

The tonality of the individual sections is well established, and the modulatory changes involve only closely related keys. Triads are outlined in Theme IIa (the first full measures of both phrases).

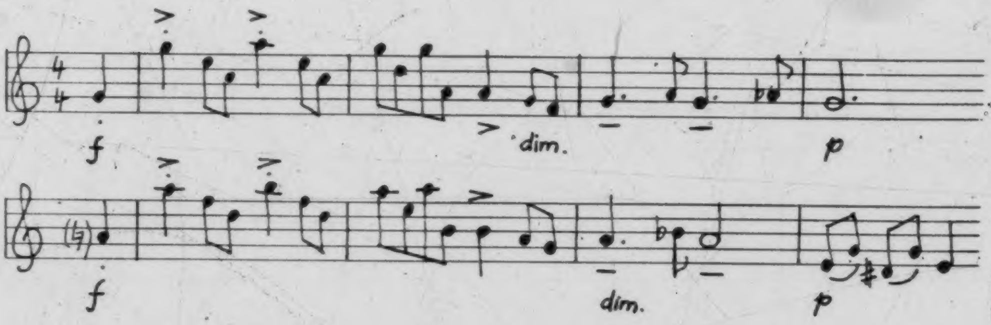
All four melodies begin with an incomplete measure of four eighth notes. This group of eighths is a rhythmic germ of the whole composition. The rhythmic structure within these measures is regular and so is the meter (4/4) and the speed (allegretto).

The dynamics are soft in Ia, Ib and IIa, and loud in IIb. A balanced combination of legato and staccato touch is presented in all sections of the themes.

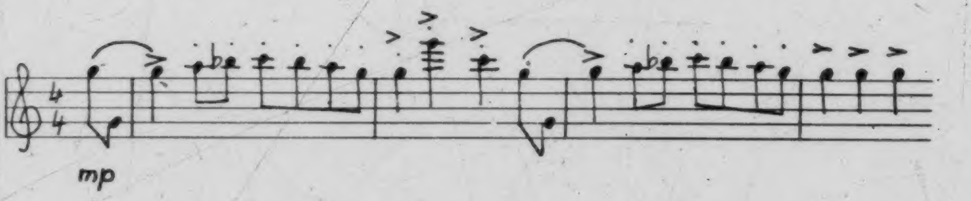
3. Rigaudon

This composition contains two themes. The first one creates a small aba form, the second one consists of one part only.

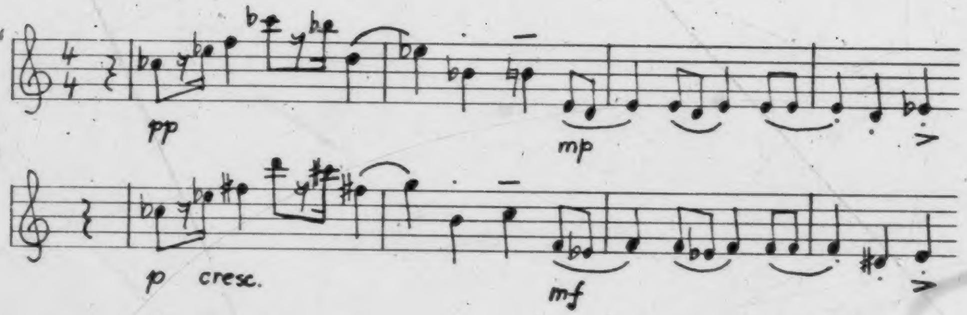
a)



b)

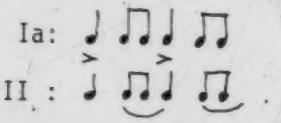


c)

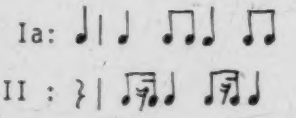


Example 34. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 3,
a) Theme Ia, ms. 1-8,
b) Theme Ib, ms. 8-12,
c) Theme II, ms. 17-24.

Part a of Theme I and Theme II are based on similar principles of construction. Each melody consists of two four-measure phrases which are identical rhythmically. The common rhythmic pattern is that of ♩ ♫ , but different beats are stressed in each theme:



The rhythmic patterns of the opening measures of each theme seem to be reversed:



The schemes of the dynamics show a similar tendency:

Ia: f ⟩ p f ⟩ p

II : pp — mp p ⟨ mf .

The second phrases of both themes form sequences with modified endings. Both themes combine leaps with stepwise passages. The leaps consist of various intervals, so that neither leap becomes prominent.

It is difficult to establish the tonal centers of these themes. First, they modulate, and second, they change their character entirely when analyzed as parts of the underlying harmonies. Only in the harmonic context is the real tonal center, C, displayed.

The range of Ia is twenty semitones, while that of Theme II is two full octaves (twenty-four semitones). Triads are outlined in the opening measures of both phrases of Ia.

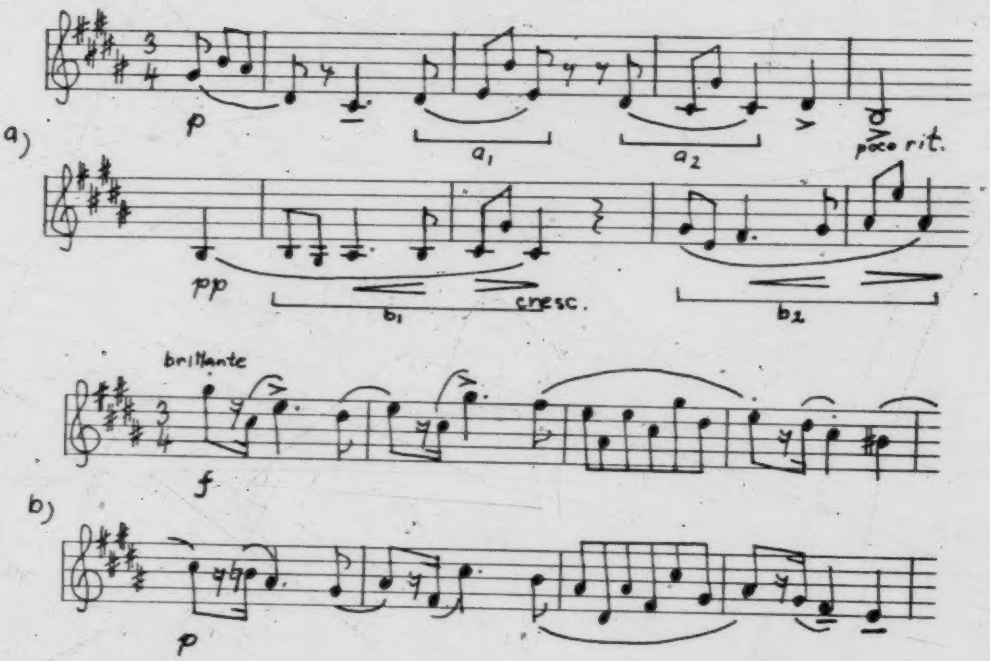
Part Ib consists of two two-measure phrases which are almost identical. The tonal center G is established by virtue of constant repetition of that tone. (Note that the G represents more than fifty percent of all tones used in this melody.) The opening octave-leap suggests common origin with part Ia. The range of Ib is twenty-four semitones. The rhythm consists of regular quarter notes and eighth notes. The dynamics are soft (mezzo-piano).

A detached, sometimes staccato touch predominates in all thematic material.

4. Mazurka

Mazurka is an experimental study in parallel fourths. Two-part counterpoint forms the basis of the entire composition. Each of the two voices is doubled at the fourth, so that the resulting texture consists of four parts. (The four voices form very functional harmonies.) Interestingly, the leaps of fourths are avoided in the horizontal line. The horizontal progressions consist of fifths, thirds and seconds. The overall tonality is B major. The time signature is 3/4 which is the characteristic meter of a mazurka.

The composition features two eight-measure themes.



Example 35. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 4,
a) Theme I, ms. 1-8,
b) Theme II, ms. 18-25.

The movement of both melodies is mostly disjunct, the leaps of fifths being particularly prominent. The two themes are bound together by a common rhythmic idea of ♫♩. ♪ . This slightly syncopated pattern passes through several modifications:

a) ♫ ♩. ♪
b) 𝅘𝅥𝅮.𝄿𝅘𝅥𝅯 ♩. ♪
c) ♪ 𝄾 ♩. ♪
d) ♫ ♪ 𝄾 𝄾 ♪
e) ♫ ♩ ♩
f) 𝅘𝅥𝅮.𝄿𝅘𝅥𝅯 ♩ ♩.

(The dotted versions (𝅘𝅥𝅮.𝄿𝅘𝅥𝅯) are associated with the second theme only.)

The soft Theme I consists of two four-measure phrases. The material of the two phrases is non-repetitive. Small groups of notes (marked

a_1 a_2 and b_1 b_2 in Example 35a) show a sequential relationship. The range of this theme is twenty semitones. The tonal center is B.

Theme II is loud in its first half, and soft in the second half, the whole being marked brillante. It consists of two four-measure phrases, the second phrase being a sequence a perfect fifth below the first phrase. The tonal center of the first phrase is C-sharp, that of the second phrase, F-sharp. The movement of these implied centers can be analyzed as a progression from the area of the supertonic to the area of the dominant of the original tonality of B major.

The range of Theme II is seventeen semitones.

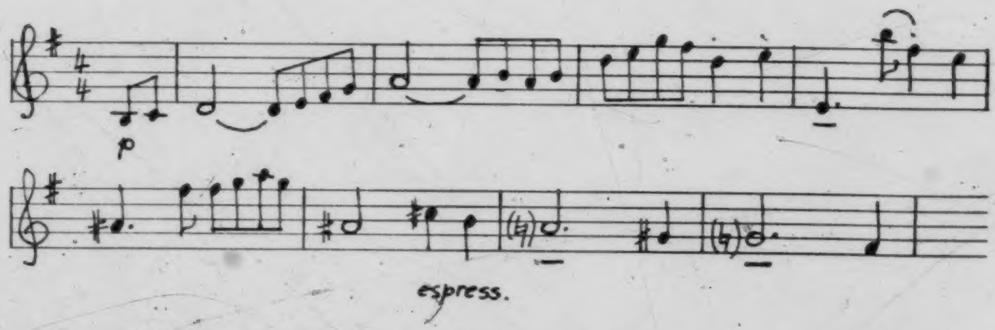
The alternation of legato phrases with occasional staccato notes, and the use of accents mainly on the weak beats represent important means of expression in both themes.

5. Capriccio

Capriccio is one of the longest pieces in this volume. Its speed is lively, and the meter is 4/4. The key signature uses alternately one sharp and no accidentals. The tonal center fluctuates.

Capriccio contains three themes.

Theme I is eight measures long. Its melody is non-repetitive, and the rhythmic structure is irregular.

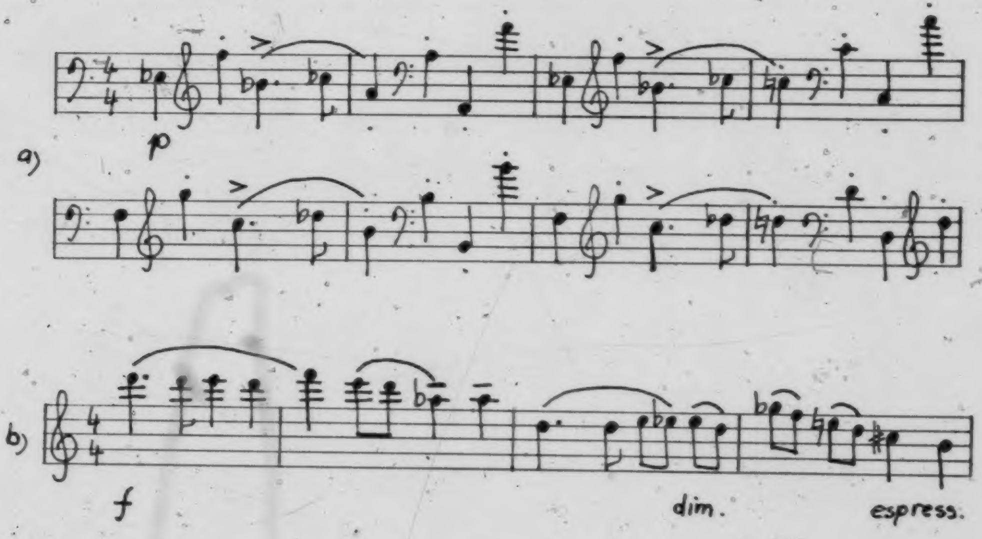


Example 36. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 5, Theme I, ms. 1-8.

Leaps of different sizes alternate with stepwise passages. Of the various rhythmic patterns, the groups of four eighth notes are most prominent. The melodic range is twenty-four semitones. The tonal center oscillates between G and E. The dynamics are soft (piano) and a non-legato touch is used.

The second theme consists of two parts, IIa and IIb. Part IIa is eight measures long, while IIb is only half of this length.

Both parts make use of a dotted pattern of ♩. ♪ which was also used in Theme I.

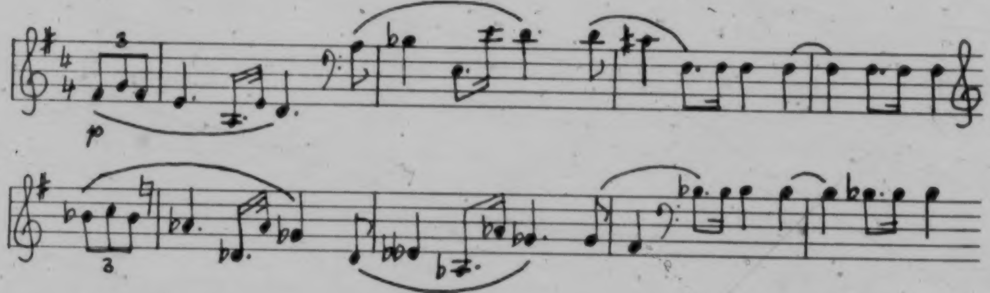


Example 37. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 5,
a) Theme IIa, ms. 22-29,
b) Theme IIb, ms. 30-33.

Each of these melodies can be divided into two halves. The second half of IIa is a sequence a major second higher; the second half of IIb is a variation on the opening half an octave lower. The leaping melodic line of IIa emphasizes octave and double-octave jumps, while IIb consists mostly of stepwise motion. The range of part IIa is thirty-four semitones, while that of IIb is only eighteen semitones. The tonal center of the whole theme is D.

The dynamics are soft in IIa and loud in IIb. A similar contrast is seen in the area of pianistic touch. The staccato of part IIa opposes the smoothness of IIb.

Theme III is constructed of two four-measure phrases. It introduces a new agitated rhythm of triplets and dotted patterns. Again, it consists of two sequential halves a perfect fourth apart.



Example 38. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 5, Theme III, ms. 48-56.

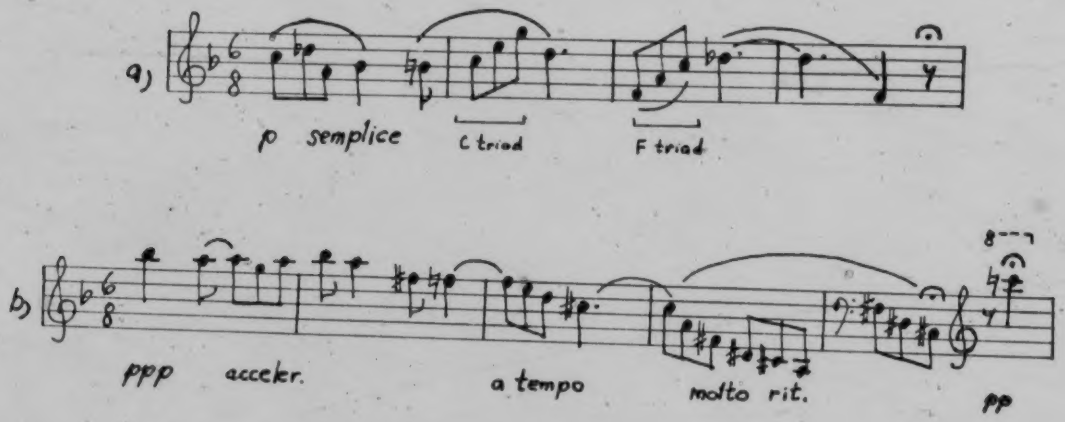
The modulating character of this theme is made obvious by the cancellation of the sharp in the key signature, and subsequent introduction of flats into the music. The melody moves through centers on D, F-sharp and B-flat. (Notice the augmented-triad relationship between the latter.)

The melodic movement contains stepwise motion as well as leaps (perfect fifths and octaves) and repeated tones. The range is twenty semitones. The dynamics are soft (piano), and legato touch predominates.

6. Legend

This narrative piece consists of several sections separated from each other by fermatas. The tempo within the section fluctuates. No accents are used, and the dynamics range from pianississimo to piano. The tonality is unstable.

Legend contains just one theme made up of two contrasting parts.



Example 39. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 6,
a) Theme a, ms. 1-4,
b) Theme b, ms. 5-9.

Part a is four measures long. It consists of three short phrases, and is rooted in the main tonality of F major. D-flat and B-natural can be analyzed as the upper and lower leading tones of the dominant C. Two triads, one on the dominant (m. 2), the other on the tonic (m. 3), are formed within the melodic line. The range is fourteen semitones.

A characteristic rhythmic pattern of this melody is a group of three eighth notes followed by either a quarter or a dotted quarter note.

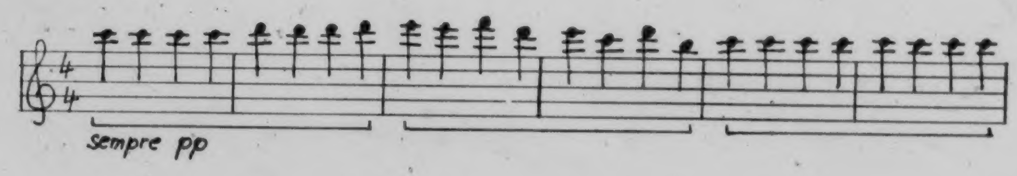
The extremely soft (pianississimo) part b is of an irregular length (five measures) and unstable speed. Even its tonality is uncertain, the tonal center sliding freely from one tone to another as the melodic line descends. In the end, the center on F-sharp is brought out. The range is extremely wide--forty-seven semitones (almost four octaves).

The rhythm is fairly free, including several syncopations. Legato and nonlegato touch is alternated.

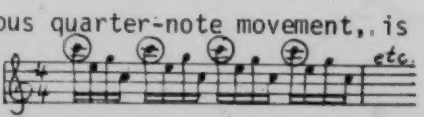
7. Prelude

Prelude was originally conceived for a harp. Owing to the harp's technical resources, this composition concentrates more on broken-chord formations, arpeggi and glissandi than on the melodic element. However, from within the chordal texture two themes emerge which combine linear character with chordal figurations. The tonality of Prelude is a bright C major, the time signature 4/4, and the speed a vivo e delicato. The "delicate" may also be applied to dynamics.

Theme I is six measures long and it divides into three two-measure phrases rather than into two equal halves.

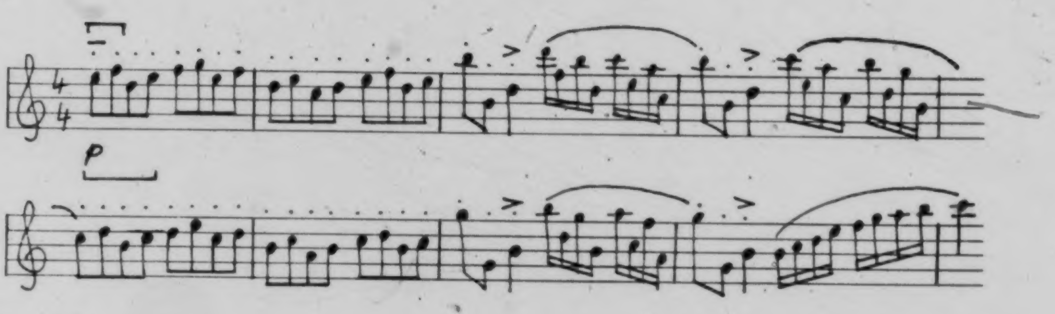


Example 40. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 7, Theme I, ms. 2-7.

This melody, consisting of a continuous quarter-note movement, is derived from sixteenth-note figurations: 

Repeated tones are prominent in this theme. The movement of ascending seconds followed by descending thirds (in the middle two measures) becomes an important feature of Theme II. The range of this simple melody is six semitones. The tonal center is a clear C.

Theme II is eight measures long. It consists of two four-measure phrases.



Example 41. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 7,
Theme II, ms. 30-37.

The second phrase creates a sequence a major third lower. Its ending differs from that of the first phrase. Sequences involving patterns of both two and four adjacent notes are formed within almost all measures of the theme.

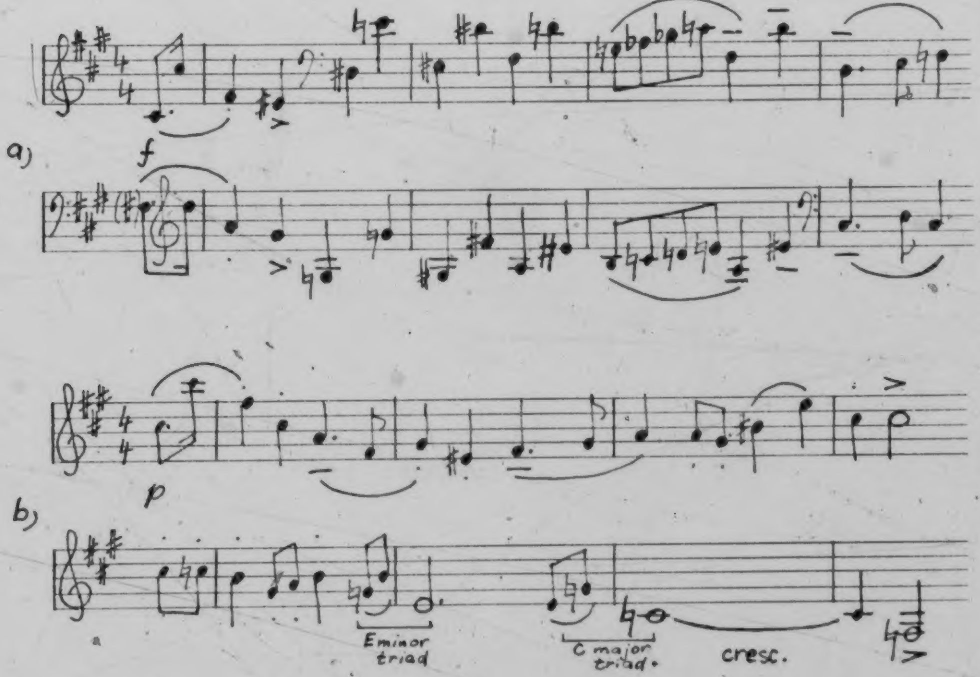
The tonal center appears to be C when the melody is analyzed without its accompaniment. However, the harmonization indicates the tonal center is E, thus lending a modal character (Phrygian mode) to this particular section of the piece. The range of Theme II is nineteen semitones. The prominent intervals are the second, third and octave.

The rhythm alternates groups of regular eighth notes and sixteenth notes. Accented syncopations appear in the second halves of both phrases. Staccato and legato touch is alternated.

8. Allemande

The robust sound of this piece, squareness of its phrases, the rhythm and the fast speed are all reminiscent of the March, No. 1. (The tonal plan contains some unusual modulations, including changes from the original F-sharp minor into the area of five flats and also into Prokofiev's favourite sphere of the "white keys.") The Allemande features two themes.

The first theme consists of two parts, Ia and Ib. Both parts are so similar that the second one could almost be considered a variation on the first one.



Example 42. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 8,
a) Theme Ia, ms. 1-8,
b) Theme Ib, ms. 8-16.

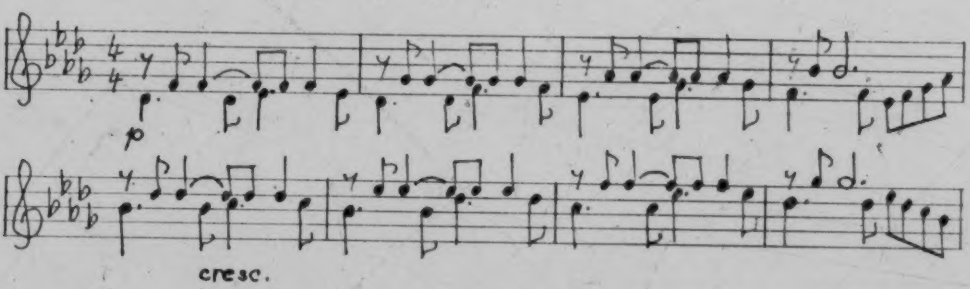
Each part of Theme I is eight measures long. Both melodies open with an identical motive of an upward octave leap followed by a falling fifth. This progression outlines tonic harmony in F-sharp minor. But after this tonal opening, each melody, in its own way, abandons the original tonality. Part Ia wanders through all twelve tones of the chromatic scale and only in the end returns to the center F-sharp.

Part Ib keeps the center F-sharp in its first half but then passes through E minor and C major triads into a temporary tonality of F minor. (Notice the half-step relationship between the two tonalities.)

In both Ia and Ib, sections consisting of leaps alternate with stepwise passages. The range is twenty-five and thirty-two semitones, respectively.

The rhythm of Theme I consists of a continuous movement of quarter notes embellished by dotted patterns and groups of eighth notes. The dynamics are loud in part Ia, and soft in part Ib. Nonlegato touch predominates.

Theme II is more prominent rhythmically than melodically. It has the character of an interlude. It consists of two separate ostinato patterns occurring simultaneously in two different voices. This combination brings a continuous movement of eighth notes. The theme forms two regular four-measure phrases.



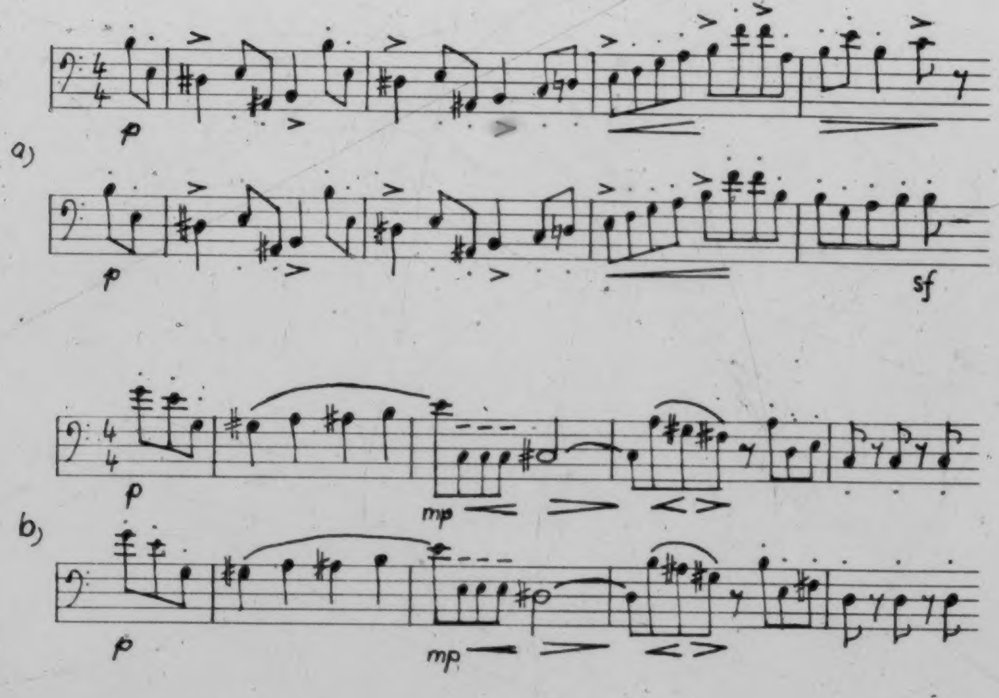
Example 43. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 8, Theme II, ms. 29-36.

This persistent, percussive theme is made of sequential stepwise progressions whose ascending movement is emphasized by rising dynamics. Its range is seventeen semitones. The tonal center shifts from B-flat to G-flat. Nonlegato touch is used.

9. Scherzo Humoristique

Scherzo Humoristique was composed for four bassoons or piano. In this four-part contrapuntal composition, usually the top voice or two upper voices in combination perform the thematic material. The ABA form of the piece contains a lively scherzoso theme in the A part, and a slow chorale type of theme in the B part. The original tonality of C major changes into D major in the middle section. 4/4 meter is used for the whole composition.

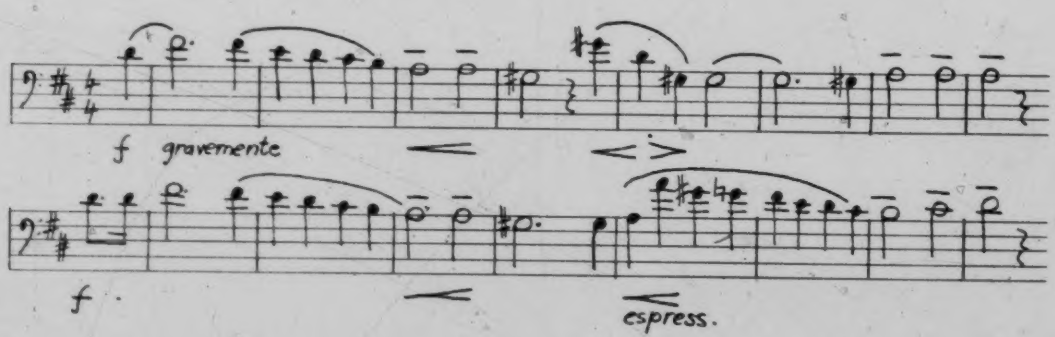
Theme I is a small aba form. Each part is eight measures long, consisting of two regular four-measure phrases. The melodies of both parts of the theme are created by an interplay of two upper contrapuntal voices.



Example 44. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 9,
a) Theme Ia, ms. 2-10,
b) Theme Ib, ms. 10-18.

There are some similarities in the construction of the two melodies. Both of them alternate quarter notes with eighth notes, and staccato with long notes. Scale passages are interrupted by leaps. The tonality is ambiguous. The tonal center of the first melody oscillates between E and C, that of the second melody modulates from C to D. The range of each of these is nineteen semitones. Besides the second, the intervals of the perfect and diminished fifth are prominent in part Ia. The tones D-sharp and A-sharp of Ia act as leading tones of the tonic and dominant respectively, if a Phrygian mode on E is considered a tonal basis. The strong beats of the measure are emphasized by accents.

Theme II brings contrast with its new key and slow speed. It is sixteen measures long, dividing into four four-measure phrases.



Example 45. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 9, Theme II, ms. 30-46.

This theme alternates legato passages with long tenuto notes. It sounds like a parody on a funeral march. It is more stepwise than the first theme, and it clearly centers on D.

The first and third phrases repeat the same material, while the second and fourth phrases are different. The third phrase establishes a half-cadence on the dominant, the last phrase brings a closing dominant-to-tonic cadence. The leading tone of the dominant, G-sharp, appears several times in this melody. The pitch range is narrower than that of Theme I--thirteen semitones. The basic rhythmic value is the quarter note. The dynamics are loud and additional interpretative indications, gravemente and espressivo, are used.

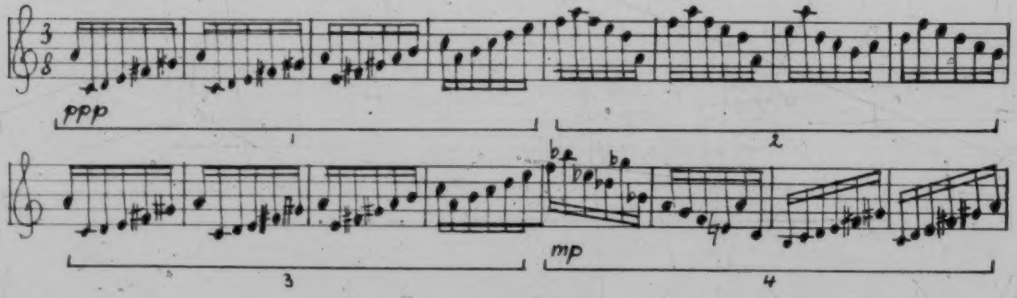
10. Scherzo

The last piece in this opus is the longest and liveliest one of all. It is a perpetuum mobile of sixteenth notes that build a long gradual climax from an opening pianissjssimo to the sforzatissimo in the final measure. The melodic content consists of wavy scale lines and broken chords, and of repeated tones. The style of the piece is very much reminiscent of that of piano Études of Chopin.

The Scherzo contains two themes which pass through a chain of variations in the course of the composition. The time signature is 3/8, and the tonality fluctuates between A minor and its relative C major.

Theme I consists of two parts. Each part and also Theme II are sixteen measures long and they all divide regularly into four-measure phrases. The first and third phrases of each melody are identical, while the last phrases are always variations or transpositions of the second ones.

a)



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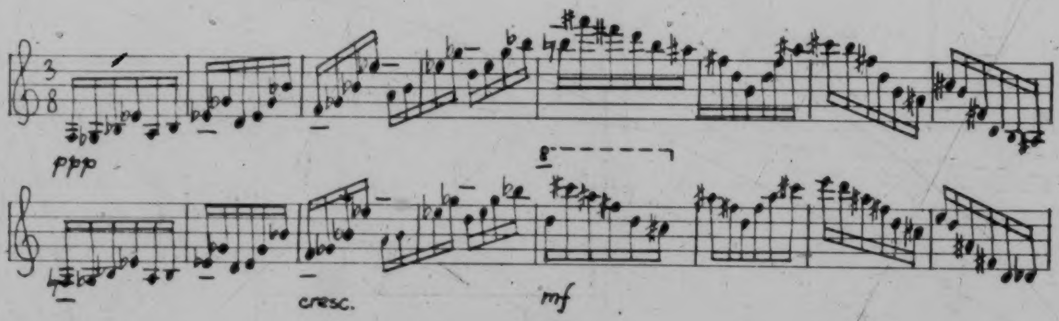

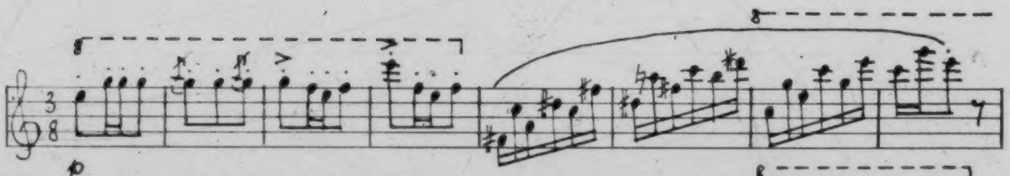

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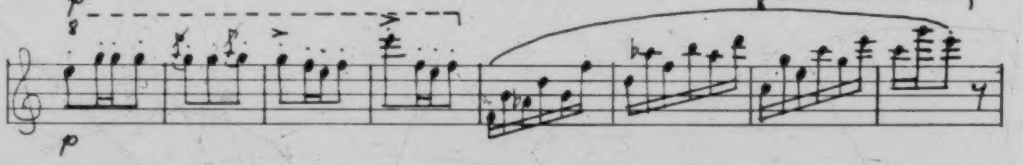
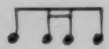


Example 46. Ten Pieces for Piano, Op. 12, No. 10,
a) Theme Ia, ms. 5-20,
b) Theme Ib, ms. 21-36,
c) Theme II, ms. 63-78.

The common feature of all this melodic material is an unceasing movement of sixteenth notes. (The cross-rhythm in part Ib is noteworthy.) However, each of the three melodies has also a characteristic trait of its own. Part Ia consists mostly of stepwise movement, part Ib of broken chords, and Theme II combines repeated notes with broken chords. Theme II also contains its own characteristic rhythm of  .

The tonal centers of the three melodies are A, E-flat and C, respectively. Some altered harmonies, consisting of ordinary tertian structures, such as major, minor, augmented and diminished triads and similar seventh chords, are found in the melodic lines of each theme. The range of part Ia is twenty-three semitones, that of part Ib forty-four semitones, and that of Theme II thirty-eight semitones. Nonlegato touch is featured in both parts of Theme I, while staccato notes are alternated with legato passages in Theme II.

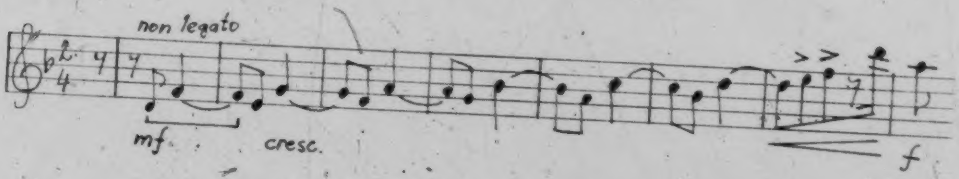
Second Piano Sonata, Opus 14 (1912)

The Second Piano Sonata is neo-classical in concept. It consists of four movements: Allegro, Scherzo, Andante and Vivace.

1. Allegro, ma non troppo

The first movement is in sonata-allegro form. It features two themes, the first lively and playful, the second traditionally lyric.

Theme I consists of a single indivisible phrase of irregular length (seven measures). It is firmly rooted in D minor--the overall tonality of the sonata--and covers a range of two octaves.



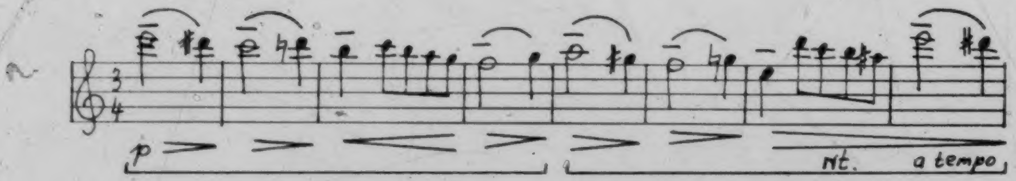
Example 47. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 1st movement, Theme I, ms. 1-8.

An Aeolian mode, rather than one of the modern minor scales, is implied by the melodic progression. The tonic harmony is outlined at the beginning of the theme, the dominant harmony at its end. The transition form tonic to dominant is achieved through a sequential movement of a one-measure motive. The ascending third, which opens the sequential motive, is a prominent interval, while a stepwise movement is a basis of the sequential progression.

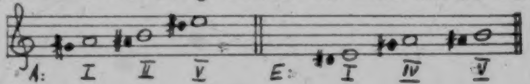
The syncopated rhythm and a nonlegato touch support the agitated quality of this theme. The meter and tempo remain unchanged.

The dynamics, increasing gradually in volume from the opening mezzo-forte to the final forte, support the natural tendency of the melodic ascent.

Theme II is also modal but uses different scale-formations than Theme I.



Example 48. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 1st movement, Theme II, ms. 64-71.

The tonal center oscillates between A and E, while the scale-patterns involved oscillate between the Aeolian and Phrygian modes, respectively. It is interesting to note that the three chromatic tones used within this melody all represent leading tones to the three main functions of either modality:  .

The melodic movement is predominantly stepwise. The melody slowly descends and then returns upwards to reach the original pitch-level. The range is exactly one octave.

The theme can be divided into two halves (4+4). The second half starts as a sequence a perfect fifth lower but its ending is modified. Rhythmically, however, the two phrases are identical. While the tempo is kept the same in both themes, the meter changes from 2/4 to 3/4.

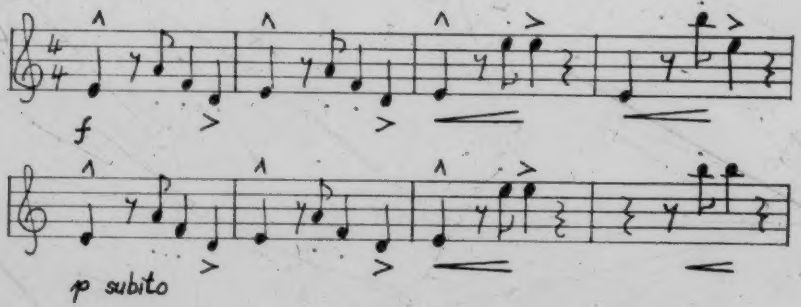
The dynamics are generally soft but additional gradation is specified in every measure of the theme. The same romantic approach to interpretation is also seen in the retardation of the ending of the melody.

2. Scherzo (Allegro marcato)

The *Scherzo* originated in Prokofiev's composition classes at the

Conservatory in 1908.[30] It is a ternary form featuring two themes.

Theme I enters in A minor and outlines the tonic, subdominant and dominant triads in that tonality.



Example 49. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 2nd movement, Theme I, ms. 1-8.

The thirds of both tonic and dominant triads are avoided in the melody-line but they are supplied by other voices. (Although both possibilities, C-natural and C-sharp, and G-natural and G-sharp occur, the emphasis is rather on the tones C-natural and G-sharp which are members of the harmonic form of the A minor scale.)

The theme consists of two four-measure phrases. The second phrase is an exact repetition of the first one, excepting a slight modification in the very last measure.

The leaping character of this melody provides a welcome contrast to the predominantly stepwise themes of the first movement. All perfect intervals become prominent. A range of twenty-one semitones is covered.

The rhythmic pattern is very repetitive, based on a one-measure idea: 4/4 ♩ 𝄾♪ ♩ ♩ . The eighth rest supports the staccato quality of the music, while the accents emphasize its robustness. The subito change of volume (first phrase--forte, second phrase--piano) is a stylistic device that fits well the neo-classical concept of this work.

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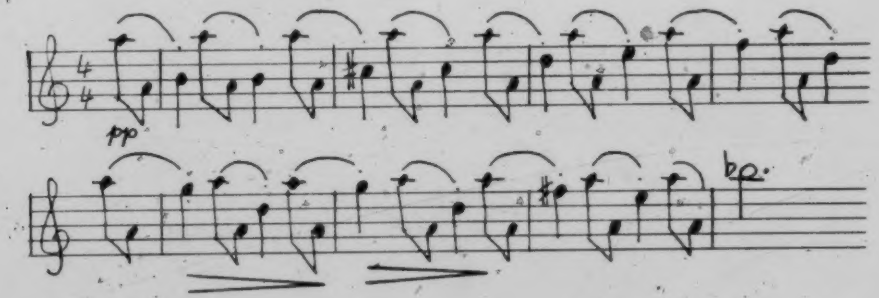
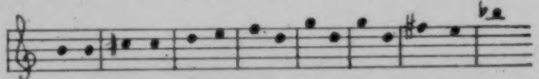
[30] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 27.

Theme II consists of two regular phrases (4+4). There are no traces of the usual sequential treatment found here. The tonal center moves to D--the area of the subdominant (also the key of the opening movement).



Example 50. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 2nd movement, Theme II, ms. 30-38.

A repeated octave leap on A functions as a dominant pedal. The remaining tones form the following melodic progression:



A modal interchange of thirds is found in this melody: F-natural in m. 34, F-sharp in m. 37. The concluding tone B-flat belongs to a different voice but it is definitely heard as a part of the theme. This minor sixth degree of the key prepares for the modulatory shift that follows.

The primary melody of Theme II contains stepwise movement but the interpolation of the broken octaves affects its character. The octave leap itself becomes the most conspicuous interval of the whole. This octave also represents the limits of the melodic range.

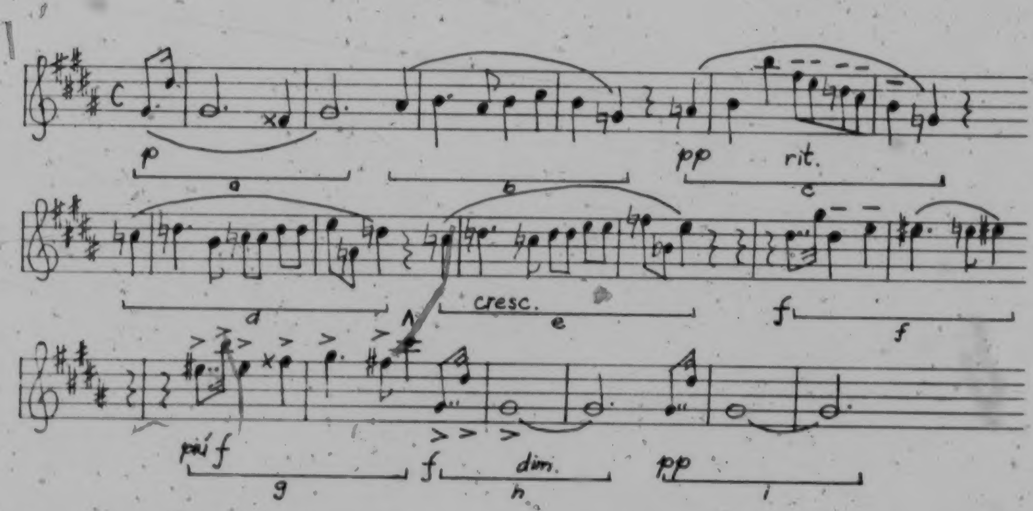
The rhythm features a repetitive pattern of ♫♩ that establishes a motor-rhythm.

The use of very soft dynamics (pianissimo) adds to the lightness and playfulness of this melody.

3. Andante

This movement contains one long theme and a short contrasting idea. The short idea connects the opening presentation and subsequent variations of Theme I, and later forms a coda to the whole movement.

Theme I consists of eighteen measures which split into two-measure phrases: $\underbrace{2+2+2+2+2}_{10} + \underbrace{2+2+2+2}_{8}$



Example 51. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 3rd movement, Theme I, ms. 4-22.

The opening phrase (a) is rooted in the given tonality of G-sharp minor but the following (b and c) phrases modulate to B Aeolian, and phrases d and e shift further into D Aeolian. The last eight measures (phrases f,g,h and i) form an extension that accommodates the return to the original tonality of G-sharp minor. The modulatory melodic line and ambiguous chords in the accompaniment contribute to the general feeling of tonal fluctuation.

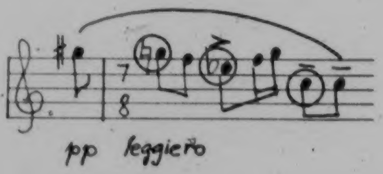
The most prominent interval is a perfect fifth.

Both melodic sequence and repetition are employed in this theme. An exact sequence is found within phrases d and e, a modified sequence in phrases f and g, and an exact repetition takes place in phrases h and i.

Rhythmically, only the two pairs of inner phrases (d and e, and f and g) are repeated exactly. Dotted patterns are prominent throughout the whole theme, occurring in the four forms: 𝅗𝅥. ♩, ♩. ♪, ♫, ♫ . Rests serve as marks of punctuation between the individual phrases. The tempo is slow and unchanging.

The dynamics create their own arch form with the point of culmination delayed until phrase g (piú forte). The climax is magnified by strong accents found on every note of that particular phrase.

The contrasting idea (Theme II) is only one measure long. It is repeated sequentially eight times.



Example 52. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 3rd movement, Theme II, ms. 22-23.

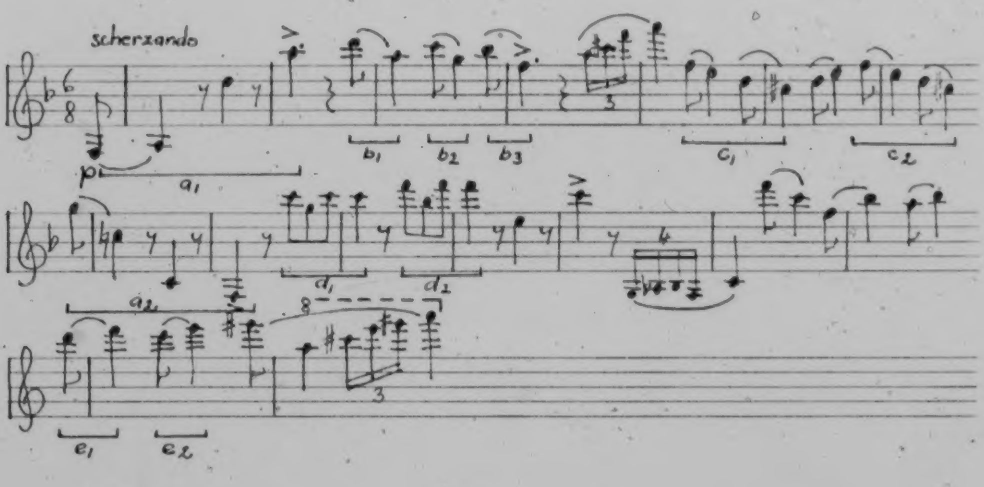
This leggiero interlude temporarily relieves the tension raised by the gloomy Theme I. It brings changes of key signature (no accidentals) and time signature (7/8). The original phrase centers on C, the

C minor triad being outlined in the melody-line. (See circled tones of Example 52.) Accents provide a rhythmic punctuation, while the overall dynamics maintain an extremely soft level (pianissimo).

4. Vivace

The last movement resembles the first one in many ways. The common features include sonata form, tonality of D minor, duple meter, fast tempo and prevailing nonlegato touch. Furthermore, an unexpected quotation of Theme II of the first movement appears at the beginning of the development section of the final movement.

Theme I contains wide leaps and its great range spans four and a half octaves (fifty-five semitones).



Example 53. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 4th movement, Theme I, ms. 17-33.

Leaps of over two octaves are not uncommon. The seemingly disorderly skips are bound together by the logic of inner motivic work. The relationships of small motivic units within the theme include exact repetition, sequences and inversion. (See bracketed portions of Example 53.)

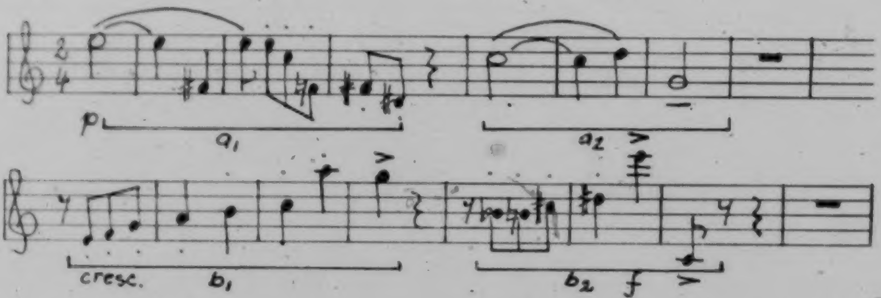
Perfect fourths and fifths, in both simple and compound forms, are the most prominent intervals. The melodic line is rooted in D minor, the middle part passing through the relative F major, and suddenly there is a turn to the dominant of the original D in the very end.

The sixteen-measure theme can be divided into two halves and further into four four-measure phrases.

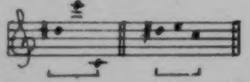
The rhythm features tarantella figures--♩ ♪♩ ♪ and isolated tones or short motives. The few accents used stress the natural strong beats of the measure. Only soft dynamics are employed, and the character of this melody is specified by the indication scherzando.

Theme II is a kind of a "marching tune" constructed of very square phrases separated from each other by rests: $\underbrace{4+4}\ \underbrace{4+4}$

$8 + 8$



Example 54. Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14, 4th movement, Theme II, ms. 59-74.

The second phrases of each pair (a_2 and b_2) are varied and shortened versions of the opening phrases. The b_2 brings an incomplete sequence of b_1 a tritone higher. The last three notes of b_2 represent a clear example of octave displacements: .

The original time signature 6/8 is changed to 2/4. (Both tied notes--2/4 𝅗𝅥|♩ and patterns of 2/4 𝄾♪♪♪ are characteristic rhythms of many Marches.)

As far as intervallic structure is concerned, leaps alternate with stepwise movement so that neither element becomes prominent.

A partially chromatic version of the C major scale forms the tonal basis of this theme. The dynamics create a gradual climax towards the end of the theme with accents on the last two tones.

Sarcasms, Opus 17 (1912-1914)

The five pieces called Sarcasms have a style of their own which separates them from all other piano compositions of Prokofiev. Sarcasms are very dissonant and they definitely bear the least resemblance to the "classical" tradition in the composer's music.

> While the odd-numbered pieces are filled with violent, unbridled emotions, a fantastic, almost eerie atmosphere pervades the even-numbered ones...In all likelihood the composer was seeking to express moods somewhat related to the ironically Mephistophelean images of Skriabin.[31]

1. Tempestoso

This fast, grotesque piece begins with a short introduction that is made of accented tritone leaps. The tritone is further used in connecting links and in the second theme which is based on the Lydian mode. The overall tonality of this composition is F minor.

Two eight-measure themes are featured.

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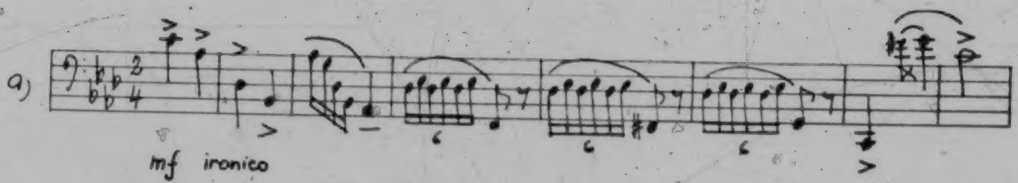
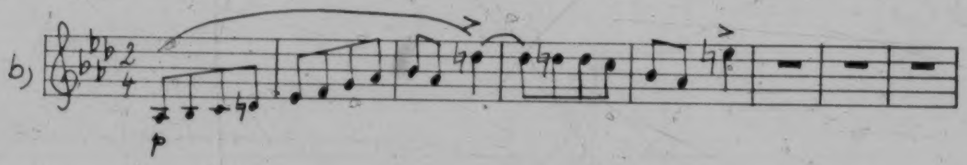
[31] Nestyev, Prokofiev, pp. 92-93.





Example 55. Sarcasms, Op. 17, No. 1,
a) Theme I, ms. 5-12,
b) Theme II, ms. 23-30.

Theme I centers on F, Theme II on the relative A-flat. The implied scales of the two themes are Aeolian and Lydian modes, respectively. With the exception of decorative trills, the first theme is made of leaps of various sizes, while the second theme contains mainly stepwise movement. (Theme II ends abruptly at the beginning of its second phrase.)

The range of Theme I is thirty-one semitones, that of Theme II twenty semitones.

Theme I establishes quarter-note pulsation, while a pulsation of eighth notes prevails in Theme II. Both the meter and tempo are regular. The longest notes of both themes are stressed by accents. The first theme is marked ironico and uses mezzo-forte dynamics.

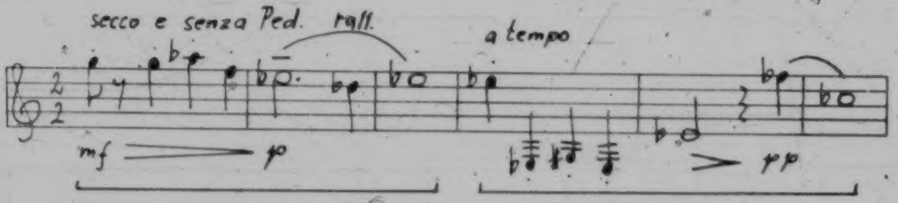
Theme II is smooth and soft (piano).

2. Allegro rubato

The second Sarcasm is a chordal piece. All kinds of tertian chords--from seventh to thirteenth chords--are used in two basic styles:

as solid blocks played staccato (having the main melody on top) or as arpeggio ornamentations. The solid chords are mostly of quarter-note value and have a ringing, percussive character. The arpeggiated structures remind one of harp glissandi.

Only one theme is found in the whole composition. The six-measure melody consists of two regular and rhythmically repetitive phrases.



Example 56. Sarcasms, Op. 17, No. 2, theme, ms. 1-6.

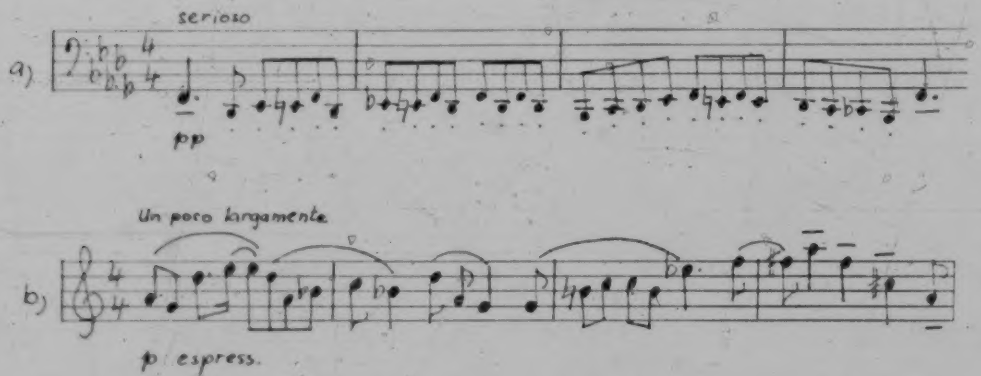
This theme is repeated over and over in everchanging harmonic settings. (The opening one-measure motive is developed particularly extensively in a long series of variations and sequences in the middle part of the piece.) The range of this theme is twenty-nine semitones. The prominent intervals are the second and perfect fourth.

The tonality is obscured by the constant use of big dissonant chords. The theme, standing by itself, can be best analyzed in A-flat minor. The other possible centers within this melody are D-flat, E-flat and C-flat.

The meter is a steady 2/2, but the tempo fluctuates, as is implied after all by the overall tempo indication, allegro rubato. The dynamics range from pianissimo to mezzo-forte. Groups of staccato notes alternate with short legato phrases.

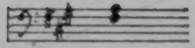
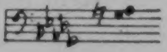
3. Allegro precipitato

The third piece of this opus features two simultaneous key signatures (three sharps on the upper staff and five flats on the lower staff) in its outer parts, while the middle section has no key signature on either staff. The outer sections are homophonic and the thematic material appears in the bass voice. The middle part is comparatively short and its texture is contrapuntal. It presents the second theme and its single sequential restatement.



Example 57. Sarcasms, Op. 17, No. 3,
a) Theme I, ms. 3-6,
b) Theme II, ms. 37-40.

Both themes are four measures long. They contain a good amount of chromaticism: Theme I consists of the first five degrees of the B-flat minor scale embellished by chromatic semitones (only the minor third degree is never replaced by a major one); Theme II encompasses eleven tones of the chromatic scale.

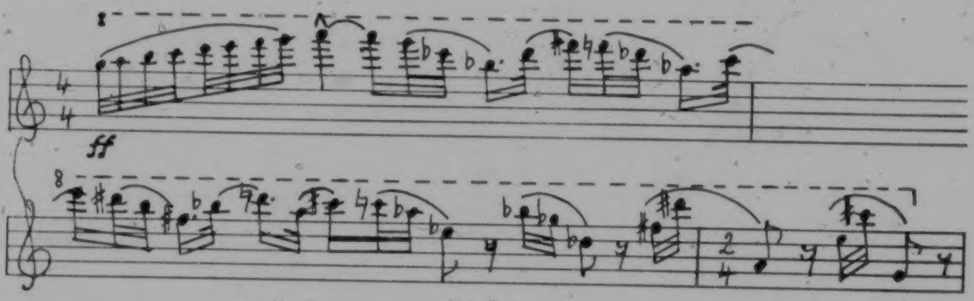
The use of two simultaneous key signatures does not create a bitonal effect. In fact, the accompaniment (of the upper staff), if spelled enharmonically, fits quite well into the tonality of B-flat minor of the lower staff. The different signatures might have been used for reasons of more convenient writing and reading. (Prokofiev's simple version of spelling the accompaniment as  etc. would have to be written in B-flat minor as  etc. Notice also the transformation of the minor third into the augmented second.)

Thus the tonality of the first theme is a fairly clear B-flat minor. The melodic range is only seven semitones, and the prominent intervals are the second and third. The rhythm consists of a regular eighth-note pulsation. Staccato touch and very soft dynamics (pianissimo) are used.

The second theme is syncopated and of a generally uneven rhythmic design. Its tonality is uncertain. The movement of the tonal centers presents a half-step modulation from G to F-sharp. Leaps are alternated with steps in the melodic line. The range is fourteen semitones. The dynamics are soft (piano), and the indication espressivo is used. Legato touch prevails.

4. Smanioso

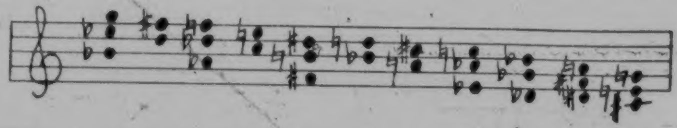
In the opening part of the fourth _Sarcasm_, a highly chromatic theme is presented in a very high register. It is made of many small sequential motives which are to be performed slowly and very loudly. The closing section contains the same theme, only sounding softly as a reminiscence or echo of the opening.



Example 58. _Sarcasms_, Op. 17, No. 4, Theme I, ms. 2-4.

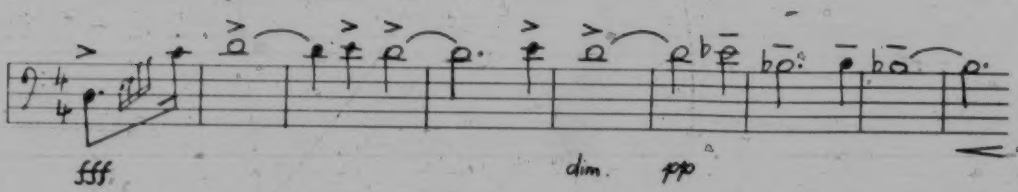
This theme is three measures long. Its rhythmic design is irregular. Also the meter changes from 4/4 to 2/4 in the last measure.

The range is twenty-six semitones. The melody forms complete and incomplete major and diminished triads which descend chromatically:



The tonal center is closest to G. (Tone G appears both at the beginning and in the end of the theme.) The chromatic scale on G is the tonal basis of the whole.

The middle part of this composition features a simple theme of long accented notes accompanied by heavy syncopated chords. This theme consists of one continuous eight-measure phrase.



Example 59. Sarcasms, Op. 17, No. 4, Theme II, ms. 15-23.

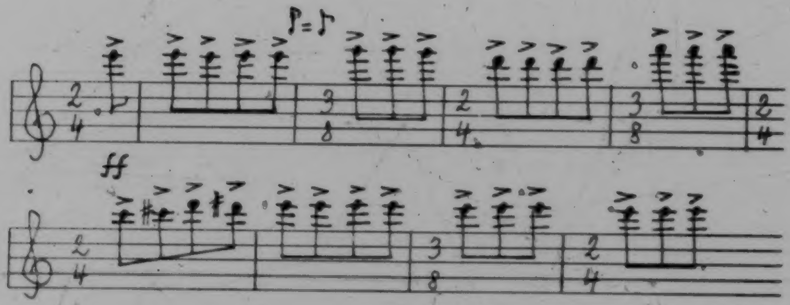
Theme II begins fortississimo but changes suddenly to pianissimo in the middle. This theme, in contrast to the first one, is written in a low register. Its range is fourteen semitones. Only stepwise movement and small leaps are used. The tonality is uncertain. A movement of implied roots from D to E-flat (a half-step progression) underlies the melodic movement.

A free rhythmic design features mainly long values. Nonlegato touch is used.

5. Precipitosissimo

The last Sarcasm--a final burst of energy--creates a brilliant coda to the whole opus. As all previous pieces, it is written in three parts. The opening section brings thick pungent chords. The middle section slackens in speed a little, and the thematic material is embodied in two-part counterpoint. The last section contains a variation on the opening part. The tonality of the piece is a loose, highly chromatic form of C major. The 2/4 and 3/8 meters are alternated frequently.

Theme I is found on top of a thick layer of chords. It is eight measures long.



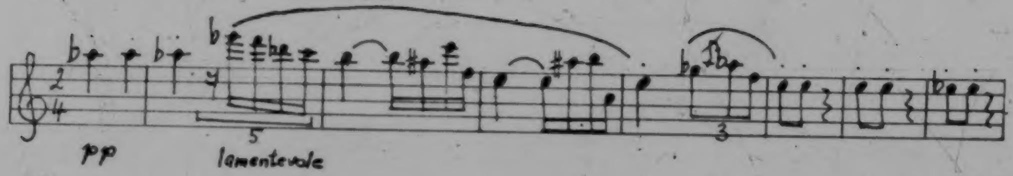
Example 60. Sarcasms, Op. 17, No. 5, Theme I, ms. 1-8.

This melody consists of repeated accented tones and a portion of a chromatic scale in the middle. In spite of the continuous pulsation of eighth notes, a strong feeling of rhythmic irregularity is created by frequent changes of the meter.

The tonal center is C. The range covers nine semitones. The dynamics are loud (fortissimo) and all tones of the theme are accented.

Nonlegato touch is used exclusively.

Theme II is also eight measures long but it is freer in both its tonal and rhythmic designs. However, this time, the meter remains constant (2/4).



Example 61. Sarcasms, Op. 17, No. 5, Theme II, ms. 38-45.

The melodic range is eighteen semitones. The tonal center is C as in Theme I, but here it is obscured by chromatic notes. The idea of the repetition of the same pitches is common to both themes. In addition, Theme II contains some leaps, the interval of the seventh being used most often.

Staccato notes are used in combination with legato passages. The soft dynamics (pianissimo) provide a contrast to the loudness of the first theme.

Visions Fugitives, Opus 22 (1915-1917)

Vision Fugitives is a poetic title of twenty equally poetic piano miniatures. Eleven pieces of the set were composed during 1915-16, the last nine in the spring of 1917.

> These boldly experimental, vividly expressive little compositions are something like entries in a diary. Or perhaps more accurately, they are like experiments from a laboratory, a store of materials to be used in the future large works...The twenty Fugitive Visions vary widely in mood and imagery. The composer arranged them in a contrasting sequence, alternating the lyrical pieces with the dramatic or gay, dance-like ones...The best works of this cycle are those in a predominantly playful and lively lyrical vein.[32]

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[32] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 132.

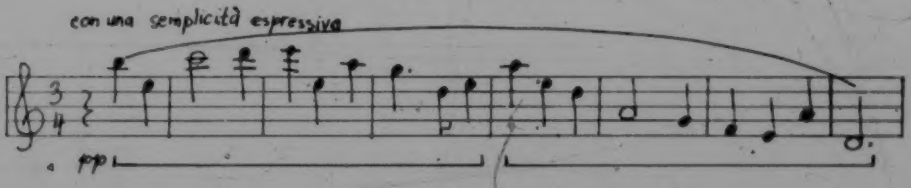
Most of the Visions contain a single melodic idea (theme) which is either repeated or slightly varied in the course of the composition. The resulting formal structures thus contain two or three short parts: a a_1 or a a_1 a or a a_1 a_2 etc. The pieces with two "themes" are arranged into small aba forms.

The cycle includes compositions written in both homophonic and contrapuntal styles.

Modes, especially the Phrygian form, are used as freely and often as major and minor tonalities. However, the tonality of several compositions remains uncertain.

1. Lentamente

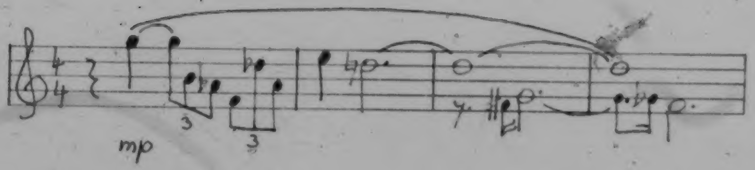
The theme of the first piece consists of two four-measure phrases.



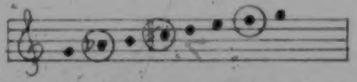
Example 62. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 1, theme, ms. 1-8.

The melody of the two phrases is nonrepetitive, while the rhythm is similar. Quarter notes establish the basic pulsation. The tonal material is based on the Phrygian mode. The perfect fourth is a prominent interval, and the pitch range is twenty-five semitones. The rest at the opening of the melody reduces the potency of natural strong beats in the metric scheme. This results in a slight rhythmic vagueness of the whole. The tempo is slow and unchanging, and the dynamics are very soft (pianissimo). The whole melody is to be played legato, and an additional interpretative direction, con una simplicità espressiva, is indicated.

2. Andante



Example 63. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 2, theme, ms. 1-4.

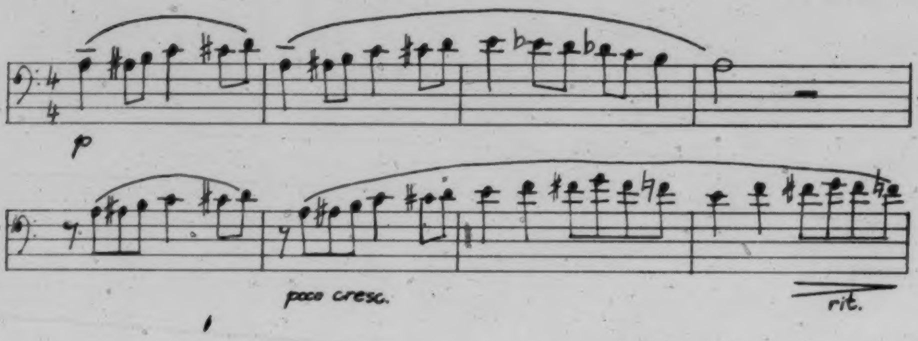
The theme of Andante consists of one four-measure phrase. Its tonality is uncertain. Major and diminished triads are formed by the melodic line. G is a tonal center and the following original scale serves as a tonal basis: . This scale combines three characteristic degrees of different modes: the Phrygian second, the Lydian fourth and the Mixolydian seventh.

Both the melodic and rhythmic activities are concentrated in the opening measure of the theme. Leaps of the sixth are prominent in the melodic movement. The range is fourteen semitones. The rhythm is very free and contains syncopations in the first and second measures. The speed is slow, the dynamics are soft (mezzo-piano), and legato touch is used.

3. Allegretto

This piece contains two themes. The first one is completely stepwise; the second one combines steps with leaps.

Theme I consists of two regular four-measure phrases.



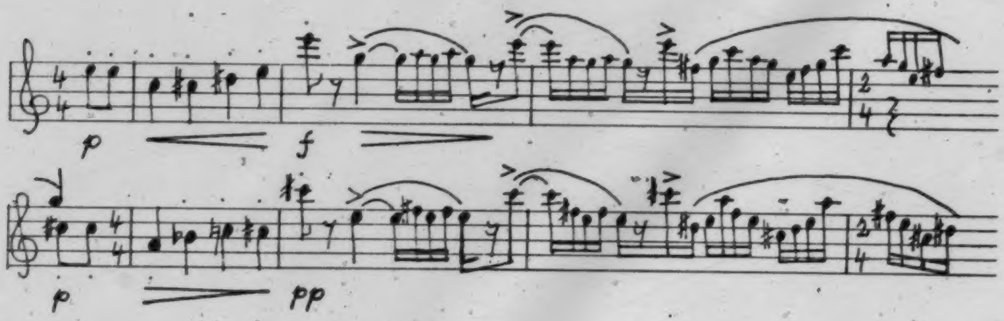
Example 64. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 3, Theme I, ms. 1-8.

The second phrase is a variation of the first one.

A chromatic scale on A is the tonal basis of this melody. The range does not reach a full octave (ten semitones). The rhythm is regular and repetitive, the strong beats of each measure being stressed by accents on two occasions. Quarter notes and groups of eighth notes are alternated.

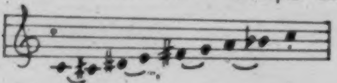
The dynamics are soft with the exception of a slight crescendo in the second phrase. This theme uses legato touch.

Theme II also consists of two four-measure phrases, but its agitated and syncopated rhythmic patterns provide a great contrast to the smoothness of the preceding portion of the composition.



Example 65. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 3, Theme II, ms. 12-20.

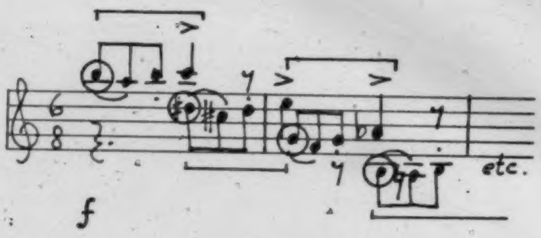
The opening motive consists of staccato quarter notes, preceded by an anacrusis of two eighth notes. Groups of sixteenth notes interspersed with rests follow. The rests are followed by accented syncopations. The meter changes from 4/4 to 2/4 on two occasions.

Leaps as well as steps are used in this theme. The pitch range is much wider than that of Theme I--nineteen semitones. A scale which alternates half steps and whole steps is the tonal basis of Theme II: . The first phrase centers on C, the second one, which is a sequential repetition a tritone lower, centers on A.

The dynamics range from pianissimo to forte. Soft, subdued sound predominates. Staccato and legato touch is alternated.

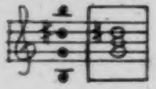
4. Animato

The only thematic material of this piece is a four-note stepwise motive which is developed in a contrapuntal interplay.



Example 66. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 4, ms. 1-2.

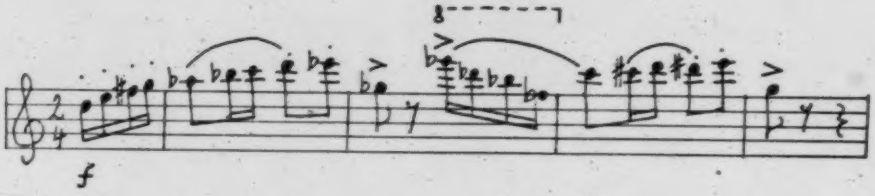
The middle part of the piece is some sort of an interlude which introduces different types of hexachords joined together to form continuous scale passages. The third part is a long coda constructed of two alternating chords. The original motive appears twice below the chords (like a reminiscence of the opening) and the piece gradually fades away.

The main motive is made of intervals of the second and its range is only three semitones. As shown in Example 66, the entries of the motive in a two-part imitative counterpoint are always a minor sixth apart. The sixths, inverted into major thirds, create the tonally ambiguous, augmented-triad harmony:  .

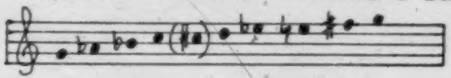
The strong beats of the measure are emphasized by accents, and a regular rhythmic pulsation prevails in the whole piece.

Staccato and legato touch is alternated in each motive.

5. Molto giocoso



Example 67. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 5, theme, ms. 1-4.

This four-measure theme consists of two equal and rhythmically identical phrases. The range of this comparatively short theme is very wide--twenty-eight semitones. The melody alternates steps and leaps. The interval of the sixth is the most prominent one of the leaps. A special scale on G forms a basis of the melodic material of the theme:  . This scale can be explained in three ways:

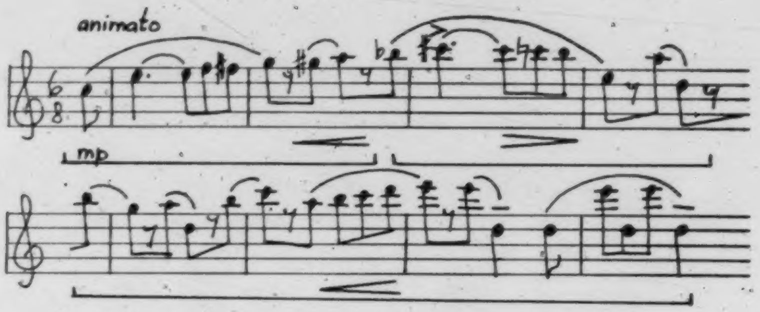
1. An original scale, especially constructed for the given composition;
2. A partially chromatic version of G minor (either harmonic or melodic form) with a lowered (Phrygian) second degree.
3. A partially chromatic version of the Phrygian mode on G with a raised seventh degree (an addition of the leading tone).

The tonality is ambiguous.

The rhythm features regular groups of sixteenth notes and eighth notes.

Loud dynamics (forte), accents, alternation of staccato and legato and the use of a very high register add to the pungent and brilliant character of this theme.

6. Con eleganza



Example 68. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 6, theme, ms. 1-8.

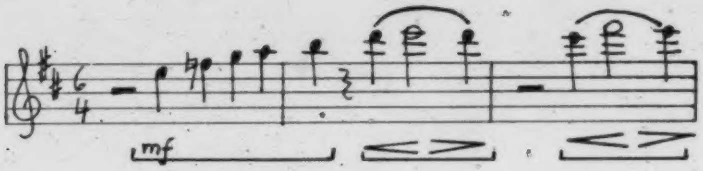
The eight-measure theme can be divided into two halves. The first half consists of two equal, rhythmically identical phrases; the second half is one continuous phrase. The tonal center is A. A partially chromatic form of the A minor scale serves as a tonal basis. The range is sixteen semitones. Both steps and leaps are used. Of the leaps, the third, fifth and ninth are the most prominent ones.

A slightly syncopated rhythm is created by the employment of ties and by slurring of the weak-to-strong beats. Several one-beat rests interrupt the flow of the melodic line and thus contribute to the overall uneveness of the rhythmic pulsation. The tempo, however, is steady, and a regular 6/8 meter is used.

The dynamics are soft (mezzo-piano), and accents are used for their expressive quality rather than as the means of loudness. The high register of the piano is explored, featuring bell-like delicate sounds.

7. Pittoresco (Harp)

This piece brings an impressionistic image of the harp sound. (It can also be performed by that instrument.) Above the inevitable arpeggio of chords, the following simple theme emerges:

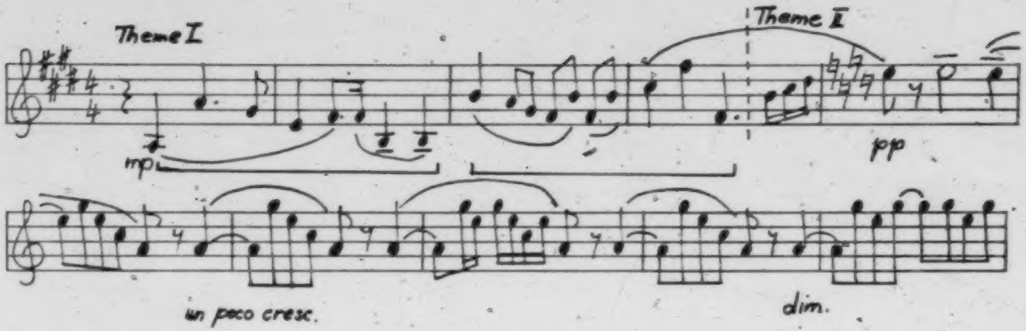


Example 69. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 7, theme, ms. 7-9.

The Mixolydian mode on A is the tonal basis of this theme. Mostly stepwise movement is used, the range being fourteen semitones. The theme splits into three motives, separated from each other by rests. The third motive represents a sequential repetition of the second one. Mezzo-forte dynamics are used.

8. Comodo

The two themes of this composition are joined together without a break, and they could almost be considered one longer theme, were their melodic contents not so different. (The second theme is further extended to form an accompaniment to the returning first theme.)



Example 70. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 8,
Themes I, II, ms. 1-10.

Theme I consists of four incomplete measures which can be divided into two halves. Its rhythm is non-repetitive, of a freely flowing design. It includes all values from 𝅘𝅥𝅯 to ♩..

The melody features the interval of the perfect octave. The range is twenty-one semitones. The Mixolydian mode on B is the tonal basis of this theme.

Soft dynamics (mezzo-piano) and legato touch are employed.

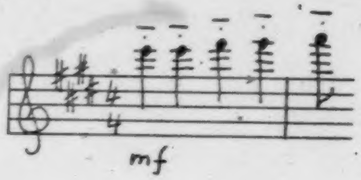
Theme II is six measures long. It consists of an elaboration of a single motive constructed of a broken minor-minor seventh chord. The theme does not readily split into shorter phrases. The motive of the broken tertian chord implies that the third be the prominent interval. The range is only ten semitones. The tonality is ambiguous. Any scale or mode within the area of the "white keys" can serve as a tonal basis. Tone C, however, is more prominent than others because it represents the lowest note of a major triad (C,E,G), this structure being tonally stronger than the minor-minor seventh chord on A.

A rhythmic repetition as well as variation are featured in this theme. A syncopated tied note forms a conspicuous opening of the motivic idea. The rests strengthen the impact of the syncopations that follow them.

The dynamics are soft (mezzo-piano) and only the weakest accents (-) are used.

9. Allegretto tranquillo

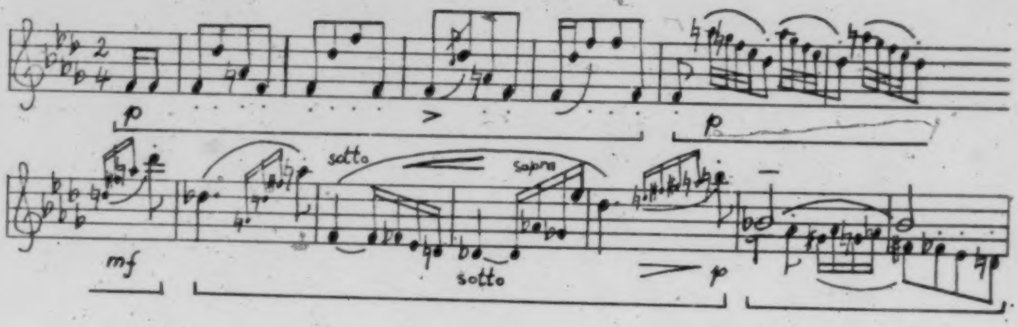
This is another of Prokofiev's short pieces that centers around a single motive. (The remaining material presents connecting passages made of repeated tones, chord figurations and scales.)



Example 71. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 9, main motive, ms. 1-2.

The five-note motive starts with a repeated tone followed by two whole steps and one half step. The range is five semitones. The rhythm uses regular quarter notes. Supported by both the key signature and the final cadence, the Lydian modality on A can be established. The dynamics are medium loud (mezzo-forte) and portamento touch is employed.

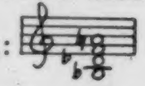
10. Ridicolosamente



Example 72. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 10, theme, ms. 10-22.

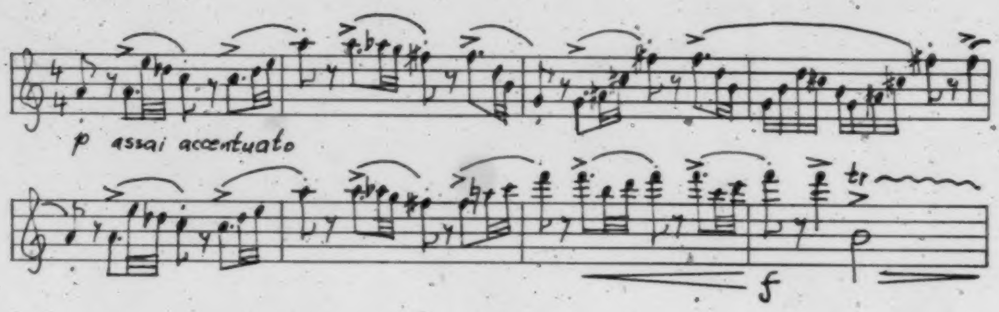
The twelve-measure theme can be divided into two halves, each half containing two phrases of an unequal length: $\overbrace{4+2}^{6} + \overbrace{4+2}^{6}$

The first half features a rhythmic pattern of ♪♪♪♩ , the second half a pattern of ♩. ♪ . Very small values (𝅘𝅥𝅯, 𝅘𝅥𝅰) are used in groups for ornamentation. Both the meter and tempo are steady. Besides the split ending of the melody, there is a feeling of contrapuntal interplay of two voices throughout the whole theme. The more important voice is represented by the pitches coinciding with the basic rhythmic patterns (♪♪♪♩ and ♩. ♪); the remaining tones imply a secondary contrapuntal line.

The melody alternates leaps with scalewise passages. The interval of the sixth is used most often of all leaps. The range is twenty-five semitones. The tonality is obscured by the extensive use of an augmented triad on D-flat in the melody-line. This chord is embellished by scale passages (whole-tone and chromatic) and by additional chordal arpeggios. At the end of the theme, the tone B-flat is added to the D-flat, F, A-natural triad to function as its root:  . The resulting minor-major seventh chord can be then considered a skeleton of the whole melody, and the lowest tone B-flat becomes the tonal center. (The first part of the theme centers around the dominant F and minor third D-flat.)

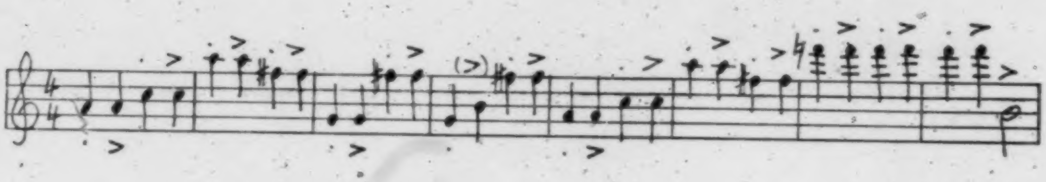
The dynamics range from piano to mezzo-forte. Both sudden and gradual changes of volume are employed. Staccato and legato passages alternate.

11. Con vivacità



Example 73. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 11, theme, ms. 1-8.

The following, much simpler, melodic idea emerges when the ornamenting thirty-second (or sixteenth) notes are left out:



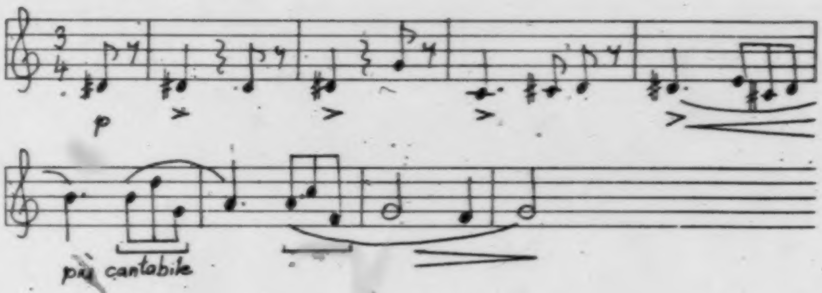
Example 74. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 11, skeleton of the theme, ms. 1-8.

The theme consists of two equal and rhythmically repetitive phrases (4+4). A pulsation of quarter notes prevails, the embellishing thirty-second notes providing only a grace-note effect. The strong and weak beats of the measure are exchanged: the accented even beats are slurred with the following light ones. The rests separate the motivic units, and stress the restless, agitated quality of the theme.

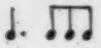
The range of the melody is twenty-two semitones. Leaps occur more frequently than steps. The intervals of the third, fifth, sixth and seventh are used equally often. A seems to be the tonal center. A raised (Dorian) sixth is emphasized in the first two thirds of the theme, but essentially, the chromatic scale is the tonal basis of the whole.

The dynamics range from piano to forte, soft sounds predominating.

12. Assai moderato



Example 75. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 12, theme, ms. 3-11.

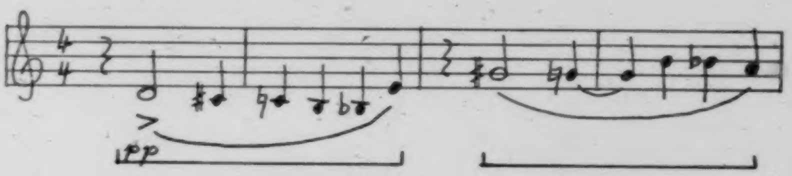
The inner phrasing of this eight-measure theme is irregular. The opening three measures consist of detached tones, isolated by rests, while the subsequent part contains one phrase subdivided into three short legato units. The latter part is built on the following rhythmic motive:  .

The tonality of this theme is uncertain. C or F are possibly more prominent than other tones. Two major triads (on G and on F) are formed towards the end of the melodic progression. The prime and perfect fifth are the prominent intervals. The range is quite narrow--fourteen semitones.

Only soft dynamics are used. A direction più cantabile is employed to ensure a mellow sound, but at the same time, accents are used to stress the natural strong beats of the triple meter. An image of a clumsy waltz results.

13. Allegretto

The theme of the Allegretto consists of two two-measure phrases which resemble each other rhythmically.



Example 76. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 13, theme, ms. 6-9.

The use of syncopations is the most conspicuous rhythmic device of this theme. Otherwise, only half notes and quarter notes are used.

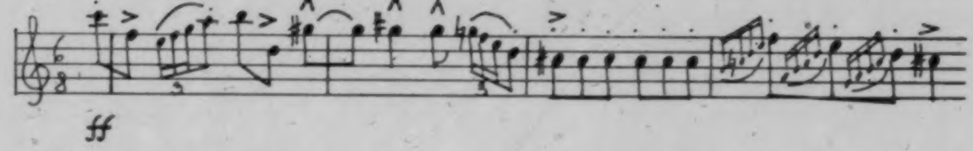
The pitch range is thirteen semitones. The minor second is the prominent interval. The tonality is obscured by excessive chromaticism. D is probably the tonal center.

Soft dynamics (pianissimo). Legato touch.

14. Feroce

This piece features two themes.

Theme I consists of one four-measure phrase.

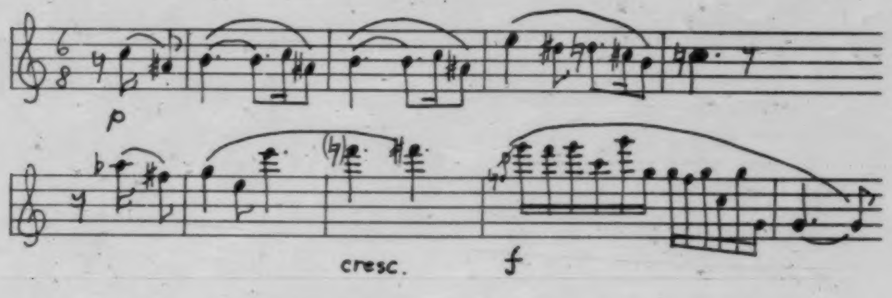


Example 77. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 14, Theme I, ms. 2-6.

The irregular rhythm of this theme presents syncopations and suggests cross-rhythmic patterns. Heavy accents and nonlegato touch support the uneveness of the rhythm.

The melody alternates leaps with steps and also features a repetition of the same pitches. The tonal center is D. The Dorian mode on D, which represents the basic scale, is embellished by the use of the leading tones of its tonic and dominant. Scale groups appear in the role of embellishing grace notes. The pitch range is seventeen semitones. The dynamics are very loud (fortissimo).

Theme II is twice the length of Theme I.



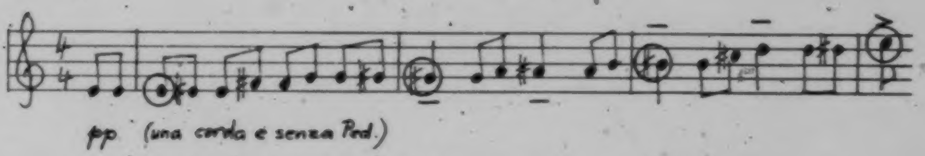
Example 78. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 14, Theme II, ms. 16-24.

Its second half starts as a sequential repetition of the opening (a minor sixth higher) but then it develops into an independent musical phrase. The overall tonal center of this theme is C. The range is exactly two octaves.

The rhythm is much more regular than that of Theme I. Dotted-note patterns are featured in the first half of Theme II, while the second half is rhythmically smooth.

The dynamics range from piano to forte. The legato phrases of Theme II provide contrast to the detached style of Theme I.

15. Inquieto

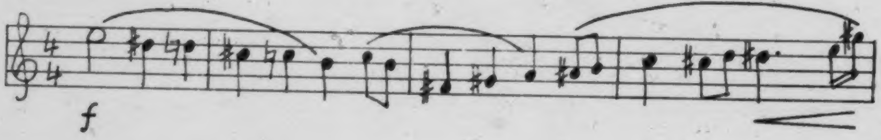


Example 79. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 15, theme, ms. 2-6.

This theme consists of one phrase of irregular length. The rhythm, however, presents a regular pulsation of eighth notes. The melodic line covers a range of one octave and consists of an ascending chromatic scale. The last note of the theme, supported by a C major chord in the accompaniment, points to C as its tonal center. Without the accompaniment, the tonality is ambiguous due to the augmented triad outlined by the strong beats of every measure (E, G-sharp, B-sharp, E).

The dynamics are soft (pianissimo), and an additional indication, una corda e senza Pedal, is used. Accents stress the strong beats of the measure.

16. Dolente

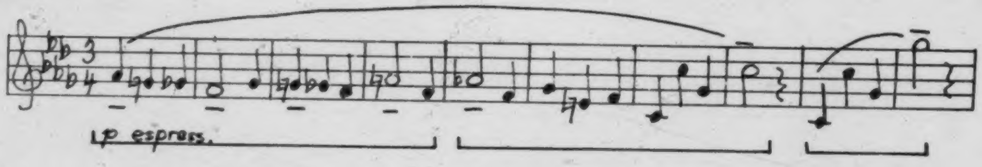


Example 80. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 16, theme, ms. 1-4.

The four-measure theme is divided irregularly into three phrases by slurs. The rhythm and meter are regular. The melody is based on a chromatic scale, its range being fourteen semitones. The tonal center oscillates between A and E. Although the A center is stronger from the purely melodic point of view (a partially chromatic form of the A minor melodic scale underlies the melodic progression), the accompaniment supports the tonality of E minor.

Loud dynamics (forte).

17. Poetico



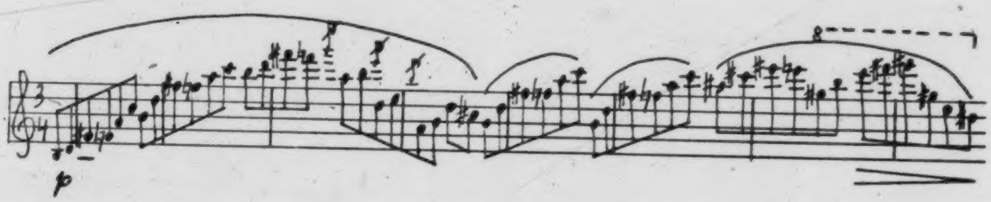
Example 81. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 17, theme, ms. 5-14.

The theme is ten measures long. It consists of two four-measure phrases followed by a two-measure extension. A rest is interpolated between the theme and its extension to bring out the coda-like purpose of the latter.

The melodic line is very chromatic. It is stepwise in the first part of the theme, but towards the end, the leaps of the tritone and octave become prominent. The range is eighteen semitones. The tonal center is F, which represents the dominant of the overall B-flat minor tonality. (The B-flat minor is supported by the key signature, harmonies in the accompaniment and by the final cadence of the piece.)

The rhythm is regular. A quarter-note pulsation is established. Soft dynamics (piano) and weakest accents (-) are used. The legato touch and espressivo style of play contribute to the gentle, "poetic" sound of this theme.

18. Con una dolce lentezza

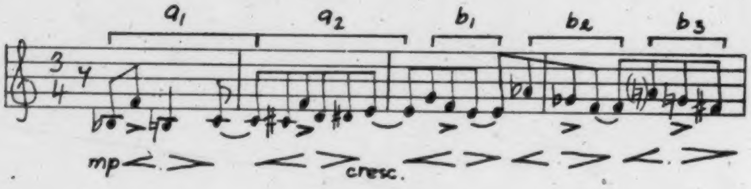


Example 82. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 18, theme, ms. 1-8.

The eight-measure theme consists of two equal melodically similar phrases. Cross-rhythms are used throughout the whole theme, in which a steady pulsation of eighth notes is established.

The melody covers a very wide range--forty-five semitones. The second and third are the prominent intervals. The tonal center is B. Broken major and minor triads of a chromatic relationship are juxtaposed in the melodic line. Their roots are a tritone apart. A chromatic scale is the tonal basis. The dynamics are soft (piano), and legato touch prevails.

19. Presto agitatissimo e molto accentuato

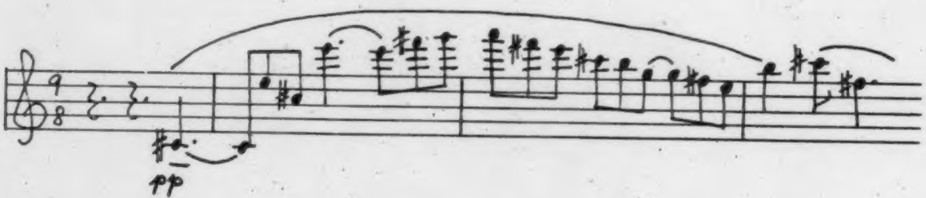


Example 83. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 19, theme, ms. 1-4.

This theme is four measures long. There can be found an overlapping sequential pattern within its first nine tones as shown in Example 83 (a_1, a_2). A three-note motive in the second half forms an ascending sequence (b_1, b_2 and b_3).

An irregular rhythmic design includes ties, syncopations and cross-rhythms. The pitch range is eleven semitones. Steps and small leaps up to the perfect fifth are found in the melodic line. A chromatic scale is the tonal basis. The tonal center fluctuates, owing to the sequential movement of motivic units within the theme.

A soft dynamic level (mezzo-piano) is varied by many crescendi, decrescendi and accents. Nonlegato touch is used.



Example 84. Visions Fugitives, Op. 22, No. 20, theme, ms. 1-4.

The theme of the last Vision consists of one three-measure phrase beginning with an anacrusis. The range of the melody is wide--thirty-two semitones. The second and third are prominent intervals. The tonality is ambiguous. The scale base is perhaps closest to the Dorian mode on E.

The rhythm is flowing, using an eighth note as the basic value.

The dynamics are very soft (pianissimo) and stationary. Legato touch predominates.

Third Piano Sonata, Opus 28 (1917)

The Third Piano Sonata came from the youthful Third Sonata of 1907.[33] It consists of a single allegro movement of considerable scope. The movement contains two extensive themes.

Theme I enters in A minor. It is made of two distinct parts marked Ia and Ib.

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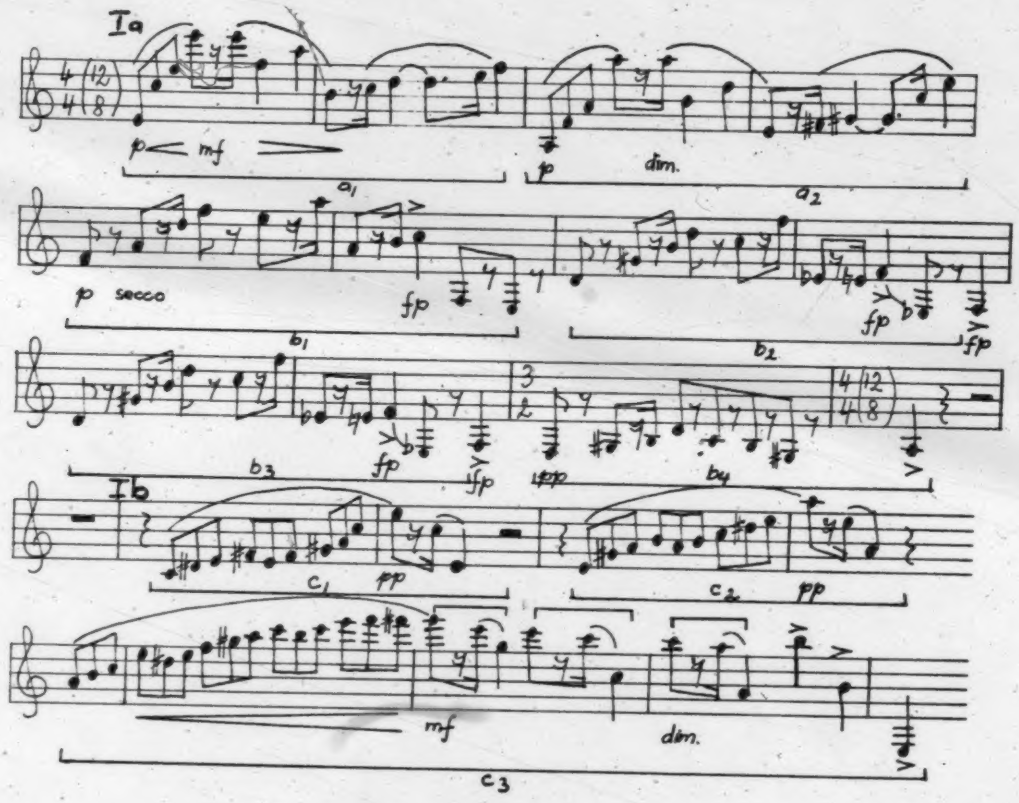
[33] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 137.



Example 85. Third Piano Sonata, Op. 28, Theme I, ms. 16-36.

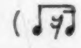
The opening measures of both parts make use of ascending progressions. The chordal arpeggio of the opening of part Ia is soon followed by a stepwise progression, while the opposite is found in part Ib--a stepwise movement of the first measure is followed by leaps. Generally, steps and leaps of different sizes are alternated in both parts, the steps predominating in Ib.

The range is very wide--forty-one semitones. The big leaps represent mostly octave displacements. The greatest distance between two adjacent tones is a perfect twelfth (nineteen semitones); it is used twice--ms. 21 and 35-36.

Some chromatic tones occur but the theme is essentially well anchored in the given tonality of A minor. The following chord progression in A minor is outlined by the melody-line:

Ia: VI_7 - II - II_7 -III - IV - I -|:VII - VI_7:|- VII - I;
Ib: I - V - I - III - I - V.

The whole theme is constructed of two-measure phrases. Sequential progressions are found in adjacent phrases. (The endings of some sequences are varied.) The sequential treatment concerns the following pairs or groups of phrases: a_1 and a_2, b_1, b_2 and b_3, (b_4 is an independent phrase that forms a conclusion to section Ia), c_1, c_2 and c_3. The c_3 is a double phrase. It starts as another sequence of the group c (only two beats earlier) but after the characteristic opening, an independent sequence of a short motive is established within the phrase. (See the sequential scheme of Example 85.)

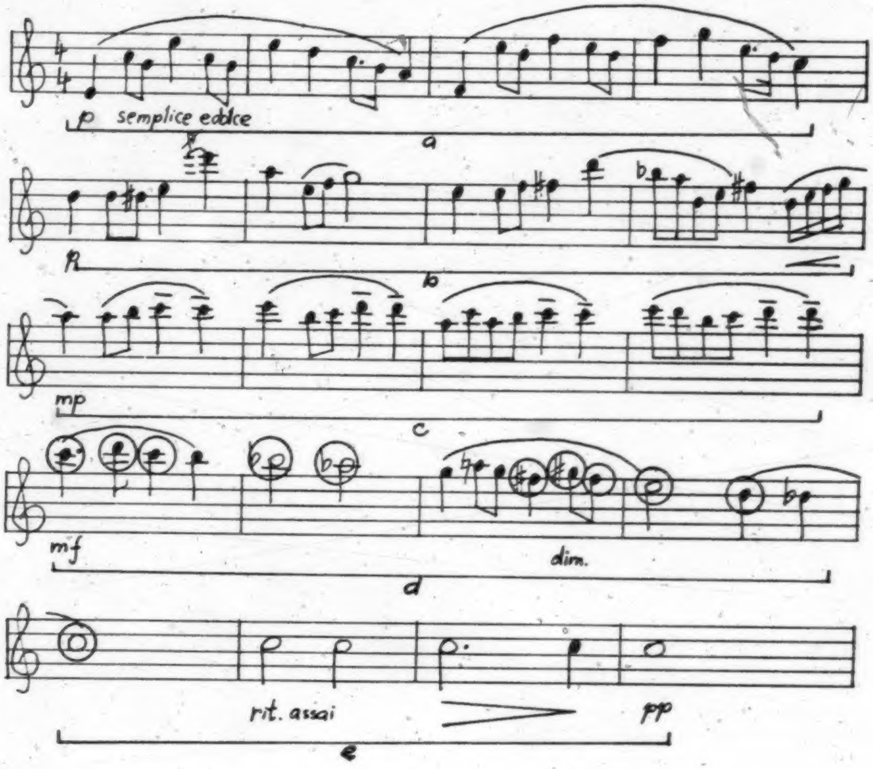
A combination of two quadruple time signatures, 4/4 and 12/8, is used as a basis for rhythmic development. (There is one exception of a measure in 3/2 time at m. 26.) The prominent rhythm is a dotted pattern () which is used in both parts of the theme. The overall rhythm is uneven, owing to these dotted figures and many rests. The tempo, however, is steady.

Predominantly soft dynamics are used only in the initial presentation of the themes in the sonata's exposition. The subdued sound of the exposition is balanced by extremely loud and powerful introduction, development and coda sections.

Nonlegato passages alternate with the legato ones.

Several accents in section Ia create syncopations.

The lyrical second theme is conceived in the relative major key.



Example 86. Third Piano Sonata, Op. 28, Theme II, ms. 58-61, 78-93.

It consists of four separate phrases (a,b,c,d) and an extension (e) that provides a coda to the whole exposition section. All phrases, including the extension, are four measures long. (The material of phrase a is immediately developed in sixteen consecutive measures interpolated between the phrases a and b.) The first half of each phrase presents a melodic fragment that is varied in the second half. The variation technique is combined with a sequential treatment in phrases a,b and d.

Although the tonal basis of this theme is the C major scale, a whole-tone progression is embodied in the melodic movement of phrase d. (See the circled tones in Example 86.)

In contrast to the leaping melody of the first theme, Theme II is mostly stepwise and smooth. Besides the second, the prime is the prominent interval. The extension(e) is made solely of a reiteration of a single tone.

The overall range of this melody is two octaves. A fairly high register of the piano is used.

There are no rests employed and the rhythm is regular and smooth. The triplets of Theme I are replaced by quarters and pairs of eighths. The rhythmic pulsation is slowed down towards the end of the theme by means of both gradual prolongation of note-values and by the application of ritardando assai.

The dynamics form an arch pattern with the point of culmination delayed until the last third of the theme.

Legato touch predominates and only the softest accents (-) are used.

Fourth Piano Sonata, Opus 29 (1917)

The Fourth Piano Sonata (like the First and Third Piano Sonatas) evolved from reworking of older materials. The first and third movements were taken from the early Fifth Sonata of 1908; the middle movement from the Symphony in E minor of the same year.[34] The three movements--Allegro, Andante, Allegro--present a mixture of classical and romantic tendencies.

1. Allegro molto sostenuto

The first movement is in sonata-allegro form. It contains two themes, the first one in the original tonality of C minor, the second one in the relative E-flat major. Both themes begin on the second beat of the measure in 3/4 meter.

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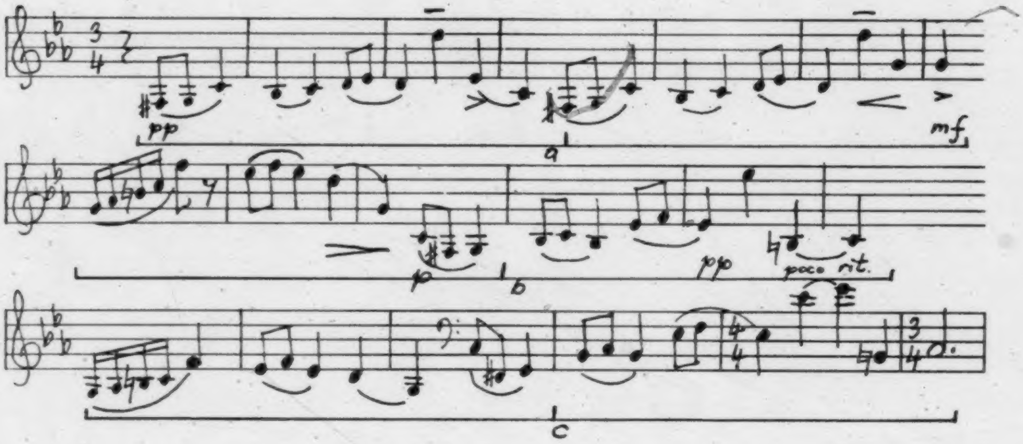
[34] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 154.

Theme I consists of seventeen measures that form three phrases:

$\underbrace{3+3}_{6} + \underbrace{3+2}_{5} + \underbrace{3+3}_{6}$

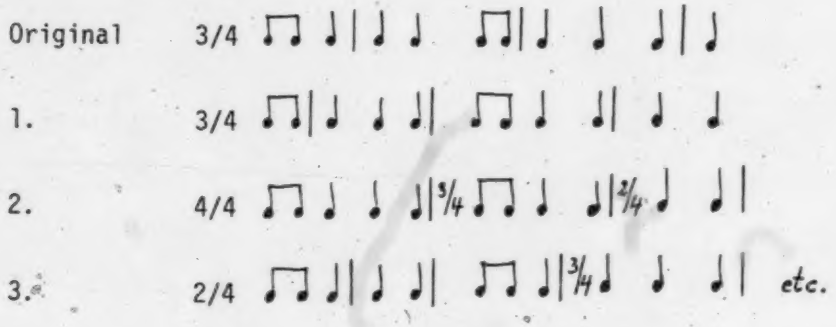


Example 87. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 1st movement, Theme I, ms. 1-17.

The phrases are irregular, owing mainly to the ambiguity of the rhythmic structure. Phrase a splits into two almost identical halves. The opening of phrase b is partly a variation and partly a sequential repetition of the opening of phrase a. Phrases b and c stand in the same relationship to each other as the two halves of phrase a. The endings of phrases b and c differ in their melodic structure as well as in their rhythm. (One measure in 4/4 was incorporated into the ending of phrase c.)

The rhythmic movement is extremely vague. Quarter notes and pairs of eighths seem to alternate in a random order. They form two-beat motives (in triple meter) with occasional single tones interpolated in between. Obviously, the divisions made by bar-lines are not as important as the motivic material itself. To find a true rhythmic pattern in this theme is not an easy matter. Several possibilities of metric arrangements are shown in the following schemes but none of them can be declared the "correct" one.

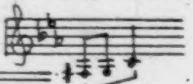
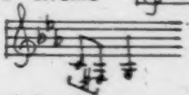
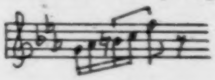
(Only the first half of phrase a is shown to allow for a quick comparison.)



Example 88. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 1st movement, Theme I, schemes of metric arrangements, ms. 1-4.

It is quite possible that this theme was conceived in a free declamatory style and only additionally given the time signature that most conveniently accommodates its overall shape.

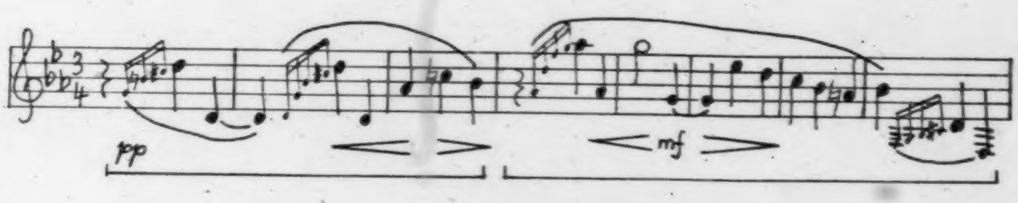
The melodic line circles around the tonic and dominant of C minor. The dominant is often preceded by its leading tone. The leading tone of the key, on the other hand, is often lowered, so that the Aeolian mode is suggested.

The characteristic motive (featuring the dominant-to-tonic progression), which opens the theme  is used in a modified form in phrases b and c: . An analogy of this fragment (featuring the tonic-to-subdominant progression) is found in the openings of phrases b and c: . A tritone becomes the prominent interval of these motives. The other frequently used interval is that of a second, seen in the present motive as well as in groups of auxiliary tones throughout the theme.

The range of this melody is thirty-five semitones and some wide leaps are present in the melodic line.

The dynamics create the following arch form: pianissimo--mezzo-forte--pianissimo.

Theme II is eight measures long, dividing irregularly into two phrases of three and five measures in length.



Example 89. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 1st movement, Theme II, ms. 40-47.

Each phrase begins with a quarter rest followed by more-or-less continuous movement of quarter notes. Several beats are embellished by grace notes consisting of arpeggiated chords. Legato touch is used.

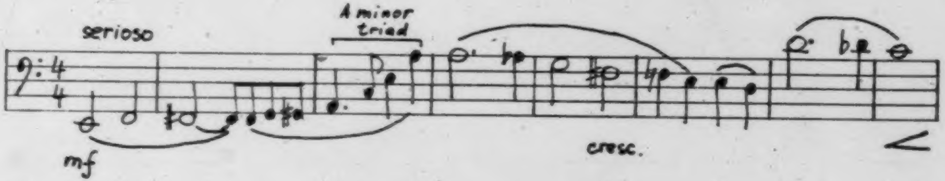
The meter (3/4) and tempo (allegro molto sostenuto) are common for both Theme I and II.

The tonal center of Theme II is G. The Phrygian mode serves as a tonal basis, its characteristic second degree being raised once in m. 46. The dominant D is featured both at the beginning and at the end of the theme. The characteristic motive is a descending octave leap, usually preceded by a group of grace notes. The octave is the prominent interval of the whole theme. Pianissimo is used in the first phrase and mezzo-forte in the second phrase.

2. Andante assai

This movement is an ABA form. Two themes are presented, one in each section, and they are later combined contrapuntally in the coda.

Theme I serves as a basis for a fugato development. It consists of a very chromatic phrase, eight measures in length.



Example 90. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 2nd movement, Theme I, ms. 2-9.

Although this phrase can be divided artificially into smaller sections, it essentially represents one continuous musical idea of first ascending and subsequently descending melodic movement.[35]

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[35] A similarity to the theme of Bach's ricercars from The Musical Offering (in fact, the theme given to Bach by Frederick the Great) was pointed out by A. Korman in his dissertation "Srodki kontrapunktyczne w sonatach fortepianovych S. Prokofjewa." [Contrapuntal Techniques in the Piano Sonatas of S. Prokofiev.] (M.A., Musicology, University of Warszawa, 1969), p. 40.

The prominent interval is a minor second.

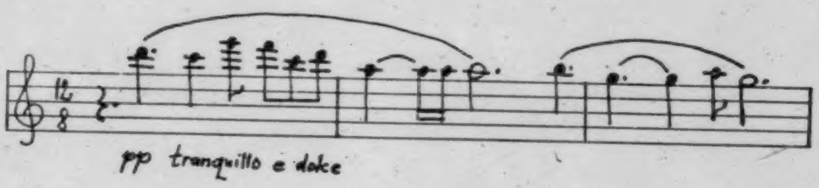
A non-repetitive rhythm of a freely flowing design is employed. All values from the eighth note to the whole note are used and no rests occur. The smooth stepwise movement of the melodic line is complemented by a steady slow tempo, regular meter (4/4) and by legato touch.

The range of twenty-two semitones covers the low register of the piano.

The tonality is A minor, the broken tonic triad being outlined in the third measure of the melody.

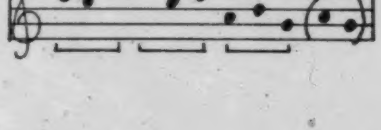
In contrast to the melodic curve, which, as stated above, is first ascending and then descending, the dynamics form one long continuous crescendo.

Theme II consists of one three-measure phrase divided into two irregular units by slurs.



Example 91. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 2nd movement, Theme II, ms. 39-41.

This phrase is written in the relative key of C major. The melody centers around the tonic at the beginning, but ends on the dominant. The one-octave range employs a very high register compared to that of Theme I.

Three groups, reminiscent of échappée and cambiata, create the melodic line of this theme: 

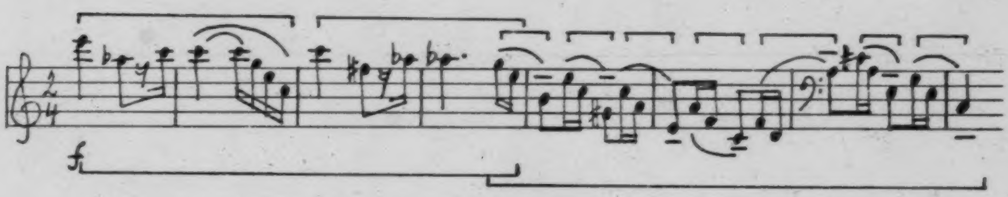
The 4/4 meter used in the first theme is changed into 12/8, the quadruple metric character thus being kept in both themes. The rhythmic movement is first gradually accelerated and then slowed down again at the end of the theme.

The overall slow speed, very soft dynamics (pianissimo) and legato touch support the lyricism of this melody. Prokofiev marked this theme tranquillo e dolce.

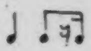
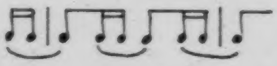
3. Allegro con brio, ma non leggiero

The closing movement is written in C major. Three themes appear in the course of the movement, creating a sonata-rondo form (ABACABA). Each theme is varied in each of its appearances, however.

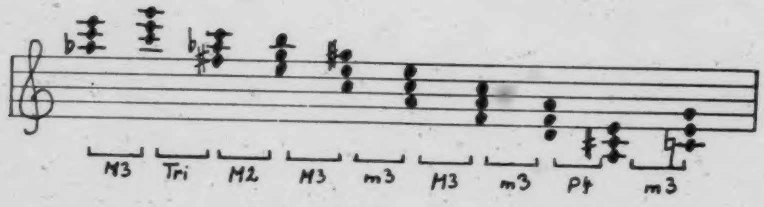
Theme I is eight measures long.



Example 92. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 3rd movement,
Theme I, ms. 10-16.

It consists of two four-measure phrases, each phrase containing diverse material. The differences of the two parts are best seen in the sphere of the rhythm. The first phrase features a rhythmic pattern of  and its variations; the second phrase presents a repetitive figure  etc. (Note the introduction of an upbeat into the second phrase of the theme.)

Melodically, the whole theme consists of broken triads. The relationships between juxtaposed chords are exposed in the following scheme:



Example 93. Fourth Piano Sonata, 3rd movement, Theme I, implied triads, ms. 10-16.

All triads are shown in the root position to allow for easy comparison of their root-movement. A tendency towards a symmetrical arrangement of the chords is illustrated by brackets.

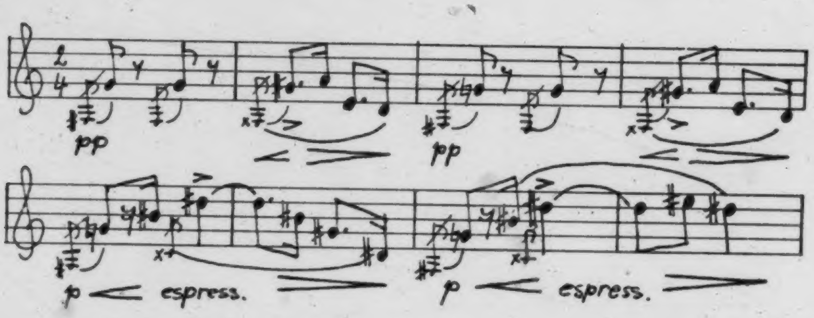
A sequential treatment can be seen in both halves of the theme.

The continuously descending melody spans a wide range of over three octaves. Owing to the chordal progressions in the melody-line, thirds and a perfect fourth become prominent intervals.

The tonal center is a clear C. The chromatic tones can be explained as upper or lower leading tones of the tonic or dominant in C (G-sharp= A-flat, C-sharp=D-flat). In addition, all chromatic tones resolve to some chord-tones of the following triads. (See Example 93. In this case G-sharp=G-sharp, C-sharp=D-flat.)

The loud, unchanging dynamics, nonlegato touch and fast speed support the energetic and brilliant character of the theme.

Theme II brings even more of the jocose mood with its dotted rhythms and many grace notes.



Example 94. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 3rd movement, Theme II, ms. 43-50.

This theme is again eight measures long: $\underbrace{2+2}_{4} + \underbrace{2+2}_{4}$. The opening two pairs of measures present an exact repetition; the second half contains a two-measure phrase and its variation.

C is a tonal center. The first half of the theme suggests the C major tonality, whereas the second half outlines C minor and A-flat major triads (spelled enharmonically)--both pointing to the C minor. The leading tone of the key is not present.

All grace notes are displaced an octave lower, but in reality they stand a semitone below the main tone. The octave displacements stretch the melodic range to almost two octaves. The prominent interval is a perfect fourth, sometimes spelled enharmonically.

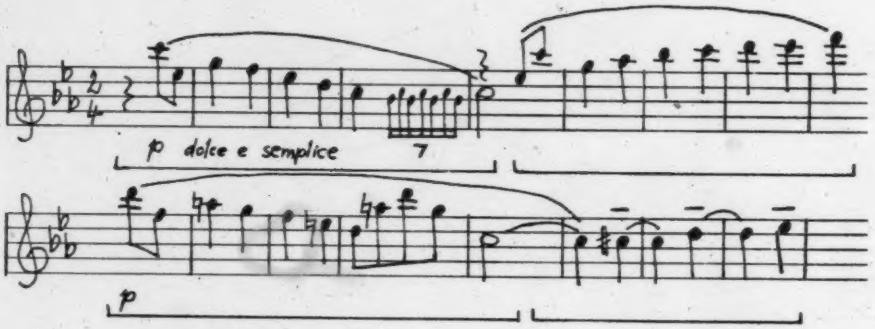
The characteristic rhythm is a dotted figure: 𝅘𝅥𝅮. 𝅘𝅥𝅯 or 𝅘𝅥𝅮 𝄿 𝅘𝅥𝅯 .

Accents stress the strong beats in the first half of the theme and create syncopations in the second half. The dynamics are soft, however, and the indication espressivo in the areas of the accented beats is a somewhat curious and contradictory device.

Detached tones alternate with short legato phrases.

Theme III appears in E-flat major. (Its first phrase could be in

C Aeolian.)



Example 95. Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, 3rd movement, Theme III, ms. 84-99.

This theme is twice as long as Themes I or II. Its sixteen measures divide into four regular phrases: $\underbrace{4+4}_{8}\ \underbrace{4+4}_{8}$. The first three phrases develop common material; the last phrase is different. The opening phrase presents a descending stepwise passage ended by a trill. A modified mirror of this progression is found in the second phrase. The third phrase employs a sequential repetition of the original phrase (a major second higher) which leads into the area of the "white keys." The last phrase provides a return to E-flat major.

This theme contrasts to both Themes I and II by its smooth, stepwise melodic movement and regular rhythm of evenly flowing quarter notes, and by the composer's indication dolce e semplice.

CHAPTER III

THEMES OF WORKS FOR SOLO INSTRUMENT WITH ACCOMPANIMENT

First Piano Concerto, Opus 10 (1911-1912)

> The First Piano Concerto in D-flat major was, for the young Prokofiev, something in the nature of a creative declaration. He himself considered it his "first more or less mature work, in terms of both the conception and its realization"... It vividly represented Prokofiev's own distinctive piano style, combining the massive texture of chords and octaves with very difficult "acrobatic" leaps and pearly, étude-like runs.[36]

The form of the one-movement Concerto is quite original. From the point of view of the traditional sonata form, the development section is replaced by a slow episode of entirely new material, and the recapitulation has all the characteristics of the development section. Or it could be said that a slow episode was interpolated between the exposition and development sections, while the recapitulation was omitted. In any case, the movement consists of three separate parts--Allegro, Andante and Allegro.

The basis of the whole composition is a solemn introductory theme which is repeated three times--at the beginning, before the entry of the middle section, and at the end of the piece.

The fundamental idea of the introductory theme is the following four-measure phrase in D-flat major.

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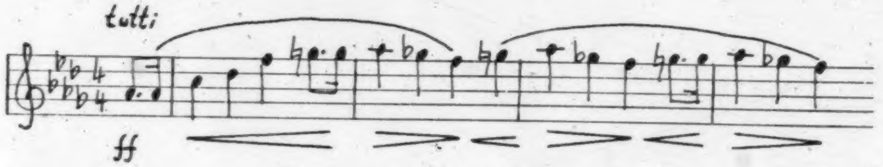
[36] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 61.



Example 96. First Piano Concerto, Op. 10, introductory theme, ms. 2-6.

In this phrase, a four-beat motive of 𝅘𝅥𝅮. 𝅘𝅥𝅯 | ♩ ♩ ♩ is repeated four times. (The third appearance of the motive is simplified to ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ .)

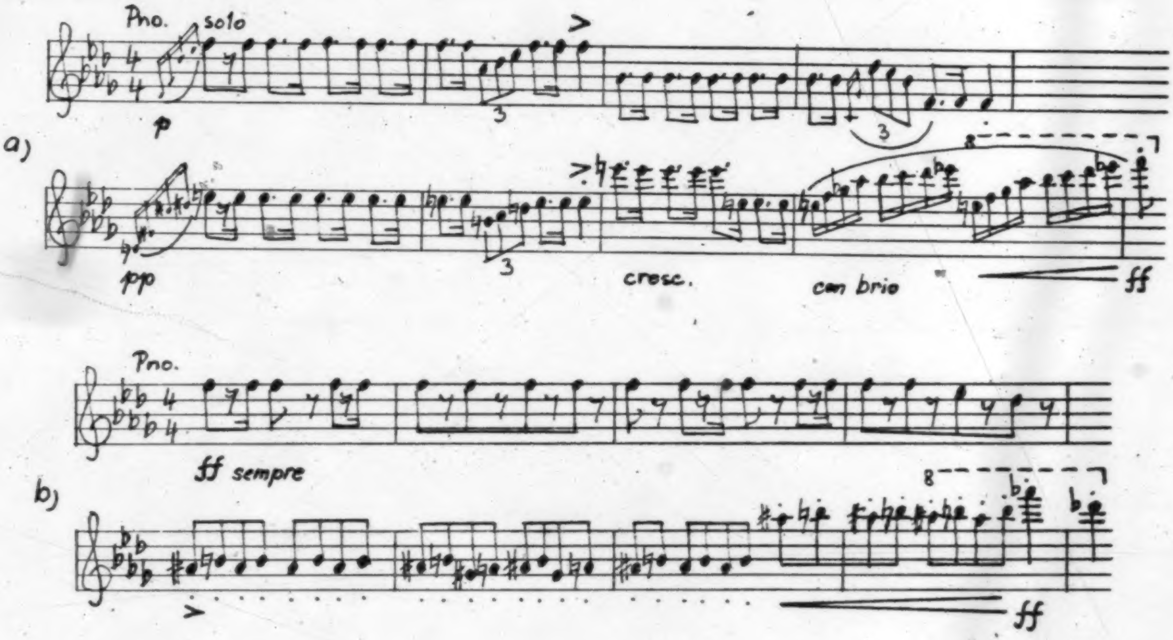
Melodically, the first motive brings a broken tonic triad; the subsequent three motives circle around the dominant. The fourth degree of the scale is raised in an ascending progression and lowered in a descending one.

The whole phrase is then used in a chain of sequences. Both its melody and rhythm are slightly modified in each of its appearances. (The opening broken triad is omitted. The first sequence appears a perfect fourth higher, circling around the tonic. The next sequence returns once more to the area of the dominant, and the following one again to the area of the tonic. In the next part of the theme, first a half of the phrase and later only a quarter of the phrase [i.e. a single motive] are used in chromatically-descending sequences. The last two measures [ms. 26-27] feature a strong dominant-to-tonic cadence.)

The range of the whole theme covers four and a half octaves (fifty-five semitones). The prominent interval is the second.

The rhythmic pulsation of quarter notes is continuous and no rests interrupt this flow. The 4/4 meter and the fast tempo, allegro brioso, are unchanging. Very loud dynamics (fortissimo), the use of the high register of the piano, and multiple doublings of the melodic line by the woodwinds and strings make this opening theme sound "majestic, imperious and challenging."[37]

The exposition section contains two groups of themes. The first group consists of two parts, Ia and Ib, both brilliant and rhythmic featuring Prokofiev's familiar "hammering toccata-like motion."[38] Both Ia and Ib are in the original tonality of D-flat major and they are presented by the solo piano.



Example 97. First Piano Concerto, Op. 10,
a) Theme Ia, ms. 92-100,
b) Theme Ib, ms. 124-132.

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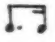
[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ibid.*

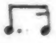
Theme Ia consists of two very regular four-measure phrases. Each phrase can be further divided into two halves. The first phrase is in D-flat major; the second phrase starts as a sequential repetition a half step lower but its ending modulates back to D-flat.

Each phrase begins with a group of grace notes. The basic idea of this theme is a dotted-note motive () on one pitch, repeated over and over. Consequently, the prominent interval is the prime. The range is quite wide--forty-one semitones.

The tempo, meter and the pulsation of quarter notes remain the same as in the introductory theme. The dynamics and general texture are changed, however. Theme Ia is presented by the solo piano and it begins very softly (piano). In the end a sudden crescendo is raised to prepare a loud restatement of this theme by the piano with an orchestral accompaniment.

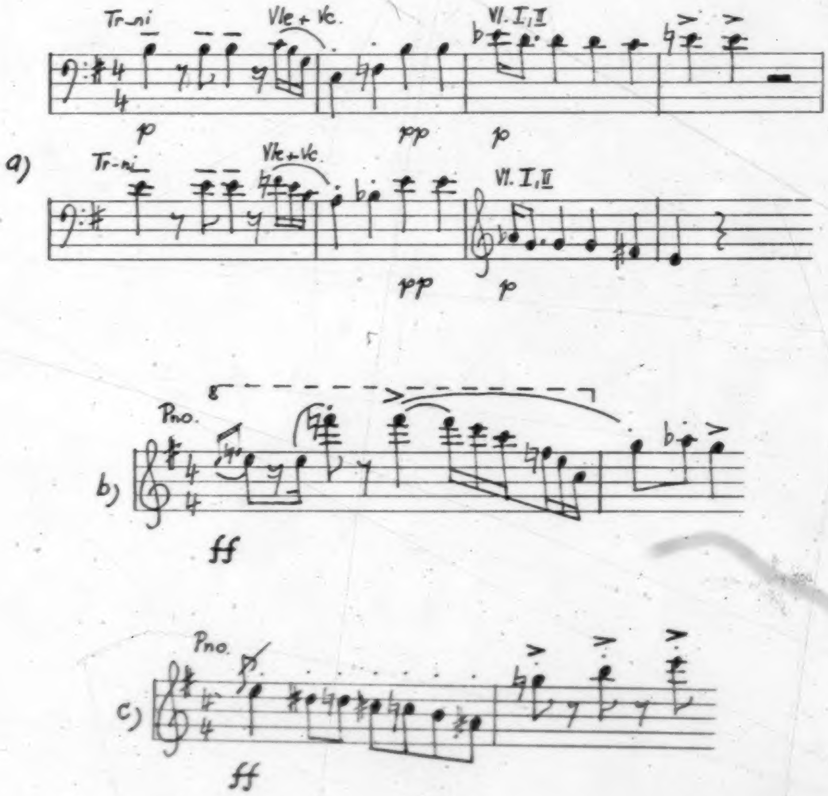
Theme Ib is of a similar structure to Ia. It retains the same tonality and meter, and also consists of two four-measure phrases. (The whole theme is shifted one beat forward in the metric scheme.)

The dynamics are loud throughout (sempre fortissimo), and the tempo is slightly increased (più mosso).

The whole first phrase (with the exception of the last two notes) is built on one pitch. The rhythm of the repeated tones alternates dotted patterns () with single eighth notes followed by rests ( ). All the rests used in this theme are meant to shorten the antecedent tones (i.e. to make them sound staccato) rather than to bring real pauses into the melody and break its continuous motor-movement.

The second phrase contains new material of a continuous eighth-note movement. All notes of this phrase are marked staccato. The melody presents an alternation of two neighbouring tones, mainly those of the submediant and a lowered seventh degree, both changed enharmonically. The pitch range is slightly narrower than that of Theme Ia (thirty-six semitones). The prominent intervals are the prime and the minor second.

The second group of themes consists of three separate parts, all sharing the same key signature of the contrasting E minor.



Example 98. First Piano Concerto, Op. 10,
a) Theme IIa, ms. 156-171,
b) Theme IIb, ms. 188-189,
c) Theme IIc, ms. 216-217.

Theme IIa is the longest of the three parts. Its character is sad and reminds one of a funeral march. It is presented by the orchestra.

The idea consists of two regular four-measure phrases. The second phrase is a sequential repetition of the first phrase, a perfect fourth higher. The melody of the first phrase circles around the dominant, that of the answering phrase around the tonic. Repeated tones (or the interval of the prime) are most important melodically. The range of all three parts of Theme II is much narrower than those of both Theme I and the introductory theme. Theme IIa appears in the middle range and is doubled in low registers of the lower strings and brass instruments. Its range is sixteen semitones. The Phrygian mode on E seems to be the implied scale.

Prominent rhythms are the dotted pattern of the opening (♩ 𝄾♪♩) and the reversed dotted figure (♫.) found in the third measure of each phrase.

The dynamics are soft (piano). The tempo of both Theme IIa and IIb slackens (meno mosso), and only in IIc does it regain the original speed in preparation for the return of the introductory theme.

The contrasting idea of IIb is called by I. Nestyev "the frightening moment of a fairy tale."[39] This melody is only one and a half measures long and appears in a very high register of the solo piano. Considering its length, the range of almost two octaves (twenty-two semitones) is quite wide. The theme opens with an ornamental auxiliary tone followed by an upward leap of a minor ninth. The upper tone is repeated with an accent and followed by a descending arpeggio of sixteenth triplets. In the end, the dominant is reached, and as in the opening, it is ornamented by an upper auxiliary tone which is now rhythmically augmented.

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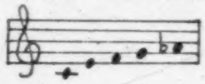
[39] Ibid., p. 62.

The tonal center of this theme is C, supported by both the upper perfect fifth (G) and upper major third (E). The tonal feeling, however, is obscured by the use of F-natural and A-flat in the relationship to the C, because it makes the tone F too prominent. The tones used in this theme create the following scale pattern  , which should be considered the tonal basis of the whole.

The rhythm is rather heterogeneous, including all note-values from the sixteenth triplet to the quarter note, and two types of rests (𝄿 and 𝄾). The phrase begins and ends with longer values, the liveliest movement being found in its middle.

Staccato and legato are alternated. Loud dynamics (fortissimo), accents and a shrill sound of the extremely high register of the piano bring a quality of urgency to this musical passage.

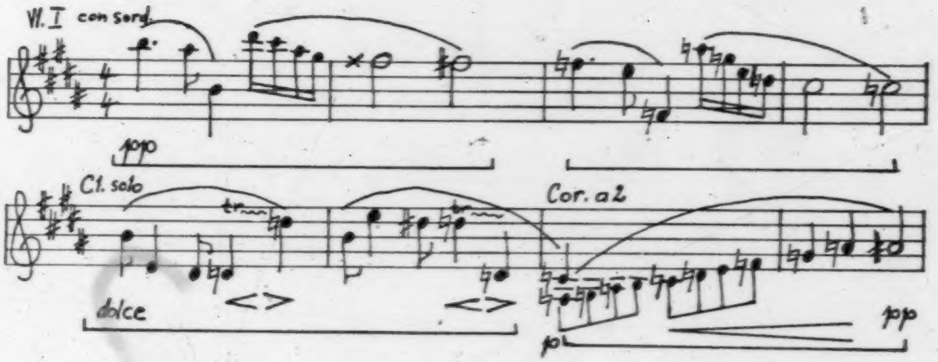
The last part of Theme II, c, returns to the dance character of the beginning. This melody is strongly rooted in E minor. It is half a beat longer than that of Theme IIb, and it presents a descending chromatic scale followed by a broken tonic triad. The melodic range is eighteen semitones. All notes are played staccato and fortissimo. The melody itself is presented by the piano and supported by most of the winds and strings.

The rhythm is regular, sustaining a pulsation of half beats in the first measure and of whole beats in the second measure.

The tempo is faster than in the previous parts of Theme II (animato) and the dynamics are loud and further reinforced by accents.

The subsequent short development of IIc leads gradually into the return of the introductory theme, the latter bringing a close to the exposition section.

The lyrical middle section of the composition appears in G-sharp minor. It contains only one theme.



Example 99. First Piano Concerto, Op. 10, Theme III, ms. 269-276.

The rhythm of the opening measure of this theme is reminiscent of the opening of Theme IIa:

Theme III: 4/4 ♩. ♪♩ ♫♫
Theme IIa: 4/4 ♩ 𝄾♪♩ 𝄾♫♪

However, the melodic content of Theme III, and especially the colouristic effects achieved by sensitive instrumentation, make this theme sound very new and independent of all thematic material heard previously.

The eight-measure theme can be divided into two halves, each half containing two two-measure phrases. The first phrase appears in G-sharp minor. The second phrase contains a sequential repetition of the first phrase a tritone lower (in D minor). Both phrases are played by the muted first violins. The third phrase brings some new material in E minor which contains a suggestion of a melodic inversion within its two halves. This portion is performed by a solo clarinet in its mellow, middle register, indicated dolce. The closing phrase contains an ascending scale on "the white notes" played by two horns. The ending of the scale contains a chromatically-raised tone in preparation for a modulation to C-sharp minor, the key in which the theme is subsequently repeated by a solo piano.

The overall range of this theme is almost three octaves (thirty-four semitones), and it contains all twelve tones of the chromatic scale. It cannot be stated, however, that the chromatic scale is a tonal basis of the whole, since the tonal centers, and consequently the scale formations of each phrase, are different.

Leaps are alternated with stepwise passages.

Various rhythmic patterns are employed. A dotted quarter followed by an eighth note, and a group of four sixteenths are conspicuous rhythms in the first half of the theme. The second half features syncopations (𝅘𝅥𝅯♩ ♪), and a regular movement of the eighths and quarters concludes the whole. The speed is slow (andante assai), the dynamics are soft (pianissimo and piano) and legato playing is used throughout. The 4/4 meter is a common time signature in all themes of the whole work, without exception.

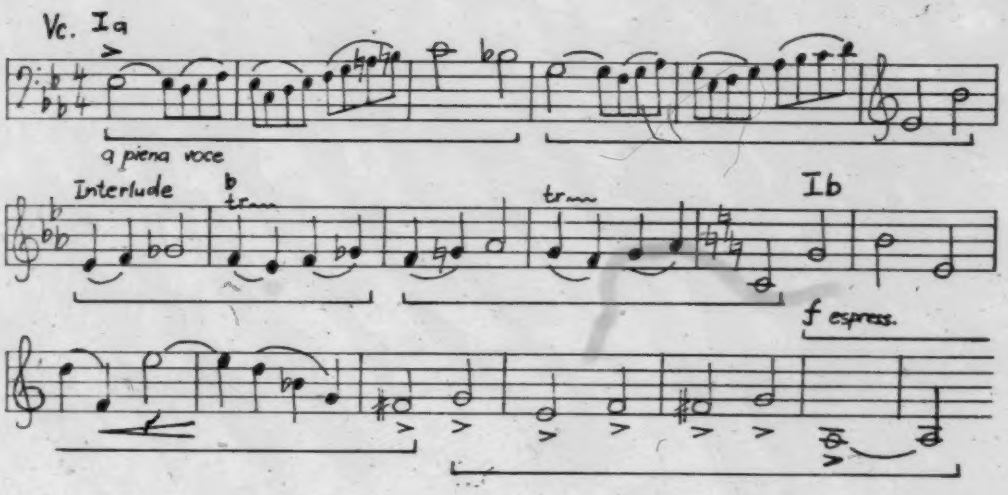
(Shortened and varied versions of all themes of the exposition section are found in the last part of the Concerto. Finally, the introductory theme appears in the role of a concluding theme, providing a coda to the whole composition.)

Ballade for Cello and Piano, Opus 15 (1912)

The Ballade was composed for a friend of Prokofiev, the amateur cellist N.P. Ruzsky. (The first five measures of the main theme were taken from the theme of Prokofiev's early violin sonata, written in 1903, when he was only eleven years old.[40])

The one-movement work features two themes--the first smooth and singing, the second agitated and rhythmic. Both themes are presented by the violoncello, and developed alternately throughout the movement. In the end, the first theme appears in its original version with a varied piano accompaniment.

Theme I consists of two parts, Ia and Ib, connected by an interlude.



Example 100. Ballade for Cello and Piano, Op. 15, Theme I, ms. 4-22.

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[40] Semyon Shlifstein, ed., S.S. Prokofiev: Materials, Documents, Reminiscences, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1961), p. 134.

The formal structure of this theme is rather irregular. Part Ia is six measures long, dividing into three-measure phrases. A sequential relationship can be found between the two phrases. Then follows a four and a half-measure interlude which again contains a sequential progression. The half-measure extension of the interlude allows part Ib to start with an upbeat. Ib is eight measures long and melodically continuous, but it is possible to divide it into two equal phrases of four measures each.

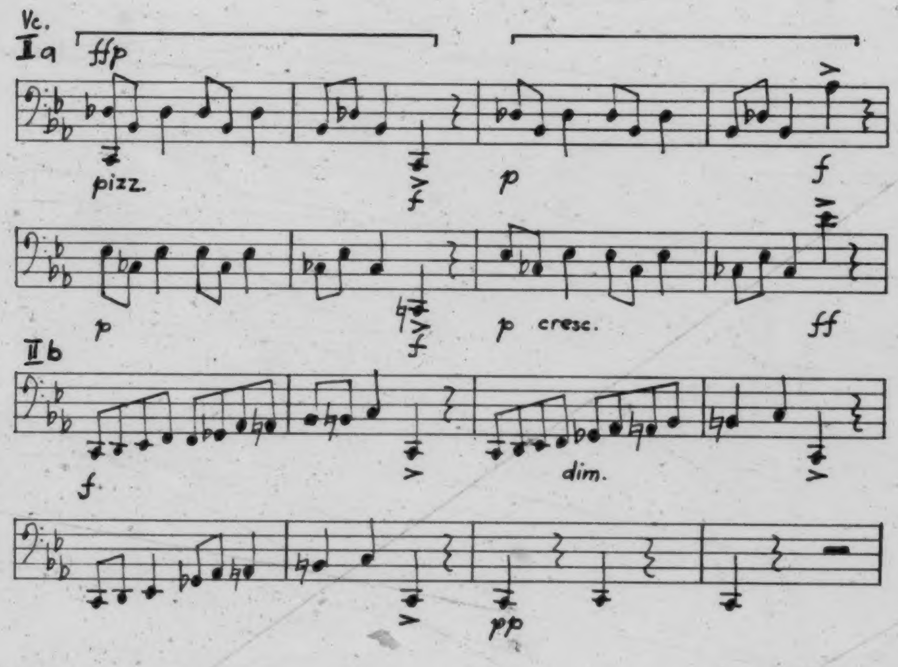
The overall range of Theme I is twenty-eight semitones. The melody starts an undulating, ascending movement from a lower register of the cello. Toward the end it reverses its direction but does not quite reach the low pitches of its opening.

Ia presents scalewise passages. The first phrase outlines a C minor scale; the subsequent phrase brings a sequence in E-flat major. The first half of the interlude continues in E-flat while the second half repeats the material a whole step higher (with a center on F). The tonality of Ib is ambiguous; two centers, G and E, become prominent at the same time. This last part bring leaps into the melody, the perfect fifth and the seventh being emphasized.

The rhythm of Ia differs from the rest of the theme in its use of regular eighth notes. The interlude and Ib alternate only quarter and half notes.

The dynamics, a piena voce, change to forte at section Ib. This last portion also contains accented notes but, at the same time, the indication espressivo is used. The tempo (allegro) and meter (4/4) are unchanging.

Theme II is very regular and repetitive. As in the first theme, it consists of two parts, IIa and IIb, but there is no interlude interpolated in between. The entire theme is played pizzicato.



Example 101. Ballade for Cello and Piano, Op. 15, Theme II, ms. 48-63.

The opening two-measure phrase is the basic idea of the whole theme. Four of these phrases create part IIa, and another four form part IIb. The germ idea is the single rhythmic motive: ♫♩ .

Principles of repetition and variation are perceptible within any pair of phrases throughout the theme.

Melodically, IIa is constructed on the interval of the third, while IIb uses predominantly stepwise motion. The ending of each phrase (in both IIa and IIb) features a leap, which supplies the required giocoso quality to the melody. The leap of the perfect octave is used most often. The range is twenty-seven semitones.

A sequential treatment is found in IIa. Its first half centers on B-flat, while the second half repeats the same material a half step higher, centering on C-flat. IIb returns to the original tonality of the Ballade's opening--C minor.

Some chromatic movement is found in both parts of the theme and even more in the piano accompaniment.

Subito changes of dynamics, accents, and the pizzicato effect help to bring out the pungent and percussive quality of this theme.

The meter and tempo remain identical for both themes.

First Violin Concerto, Opus 19 (1913-1917)

> The modest plan of the concertino gradually developed into a concerto in three movements, which are presented in an unusual sequence--the first and third are predominantly tender and melodic, while the second, instead of being the traditional Andante, is a fast, grotesque, and mocking scherzo...Prokofiev attempted to include in this concerto passages that would give free rein to the expressive possibilities of this instrument--from the lyrical cantilena to giddy scale passages and complicated shifts from pizzicato to arco, from the extremely harsh marcato sul ponticello to transparently clear harmonics...Prokofiev's inventiveness in the field of tone color deserves a separate analysis, for in this area he unquestionably contributed new modes of expression to violin playing.[41]

1. Andantino

The first movement is in sonata form. It features two contrasting themes.

Theme I is a long, undulating, lyrical melody that modulates from D major to C major, establishing several other temporary tonal centers in between.

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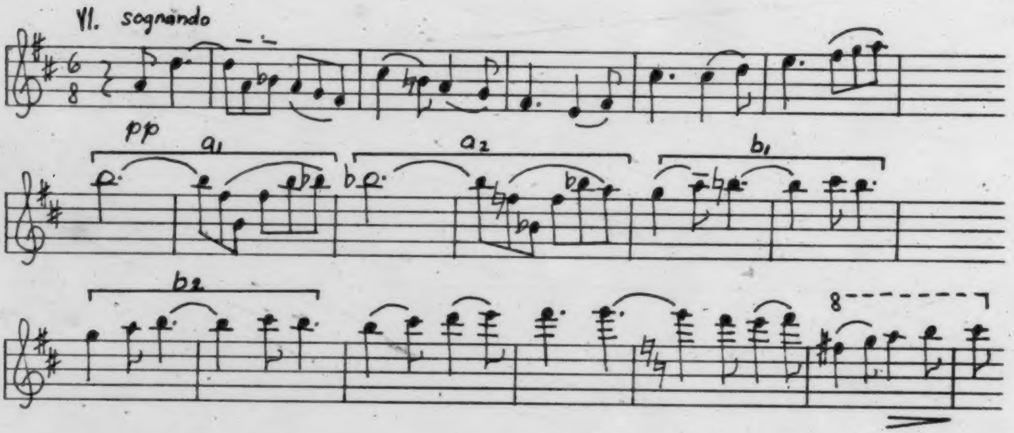
[41] Nestyev, Prokofiev, pp. 140-143.

This theme appears in the solo violin.



Example 102. First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, 1st movement, Theme I, ms. 3-21.

The interval of the perfect fourth, which opens this theme, is the key-sound of both the first and third movements of the Concerto. Besides its characteristic use in both principal themes of these movements, it stands as a self-sufficient motive that is used throughout the composition. The perfect fourth also appears in the coda of the last movement as a final reminiscence and summing up of the whole work.

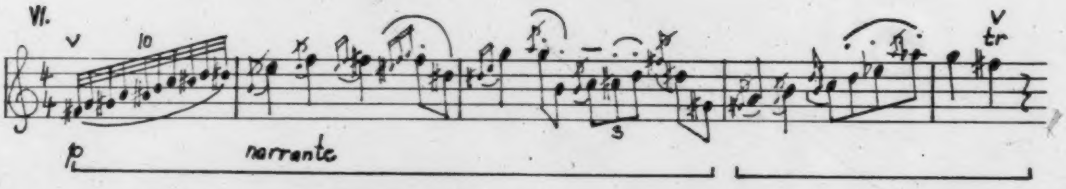
Besides the employment of the perfect fourth, the perfect fifth is used several times in the first half of Theme I. The second half contains mostly stepwise movement, the melody ascending slowly to reach high C^4. The overall range is thirty-two semitones.

It is difficult to divide this theme into phrases. Two unequal portions (10+8 measures) are formed by the general character of the melodic-rhythmic outline of the theme. The first half of the theme alternates leaps with steps; the second half contains solely stepwise motion. A regular 6/8 meter is used throughout. In the first half of the theme, groups of six eighth notes are alternated with other diverse rhythmic patterns. The second half features the rhythm ♩ ♪♩. , and its variation ♩ ♪♩ ♪ . Tied notes are part of the rhythmic structure of the whole. Two pairs of measures are repeated within the theme. The first pair, marked a_1, is repeated a half step lower in a_2, while the unit b_2 brings an exact repetition of b_1.

Soft dynamics (pianissimo) and the speed of andantino are complemented by the interpretative marking sognando (dreamily).

Theme I comes back in the violas and later in the oboe.

After a transitional passage, Theme II appears in the solo violin again.



Example 103. First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, 1st movement, Theme II, ms. 61-65.

This rhythmic theme, full of grace notes and chromatic leaps, contrasts with the smoothly flowing Theme I. It can be divided, rather artificially, into two halves. The embellishing chromatic scale of the opening is not repeated in the beginning of the second half. There are other rhythmic variations in the second half, and melodically, the whole theme is really a single integral idea.

The tonal center of the opening is E, while G is brought out in the end. The chromatic scale is the tonal basis of this melody.

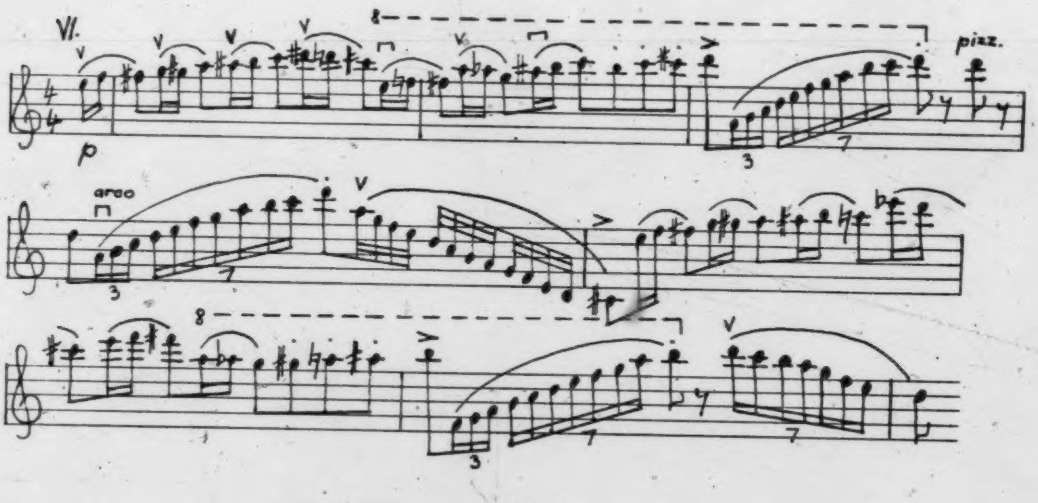
Theme II is much shorter than Theme I, and its range is narrower--only fifteen semitones. Leaps and steps are alternated, so that neither element becomes predominant.

The rhythmic pulsation consists of basic quarters (almost all embellished by grace notes), sometimes divided into regular eighths, and once into an eighth triplet. The meter is changed from 6/8 to 4/4, the new time signature remaining until the end of the development section. The original speed, andantino, is kept, but a new interpretative marking--narrante is indicated at the opening of Theme II. The dynamics maintain soft level (piano).

2. Scherzo (Vivacissimo)

The second movement is in the form of a five-part rondo. The tempo is an unchanging vivacissimo, where perpetual motion of eighth notes prevails. The meter is 4/4.

Theme I (rondo theme) appears in the solo violin.



Example 104. First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, 2nd movement, Theme I, ms. 2-10.

This theme is made of scales, the chromatic and diatonic forms of which are alternated. This alternation causes tonal ambiguity. Two centers, E and D, become prominent. E is associated with the chromatic movement, D with the diatonic movement. (The Dorian mode on D seems to be the basis of the diatonic sections.) Theme I can be divided into two unequal portions (4+3 measures). The second portion is a shortened variation of the first one.

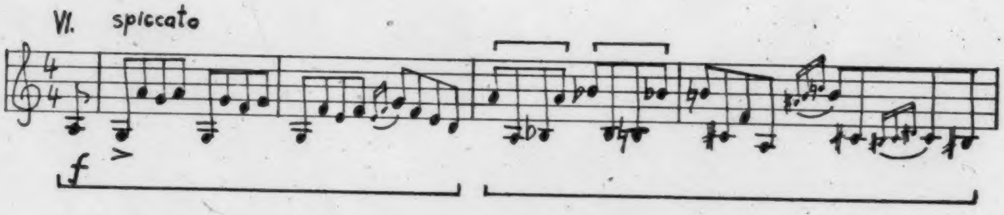
The range of the whole is thirty-seven semitones.

The rhythm brings a repetitive pattern of ♩ ♫ , associated with the chromatic melodic movement, and long scale-groups (of both regular and irregular number of notes) in the diatonic portions of the theme. (The irregular groups contain triplets and septuplets of sixteenth notes.)

Various types of bowing are used in this theme. The chromatic scales are slurred into groups of three notes each. The long passages of the diatonic scales are played legato. The last note of each scale is marked staccato. Pizzicato is used on two tones in the middle of the theme.

The dynamics are soft (piano). Some accents are employed on the strong beats of the measure.

Theme II (first episode) appears in the solo violin, marked spiccato and forte.



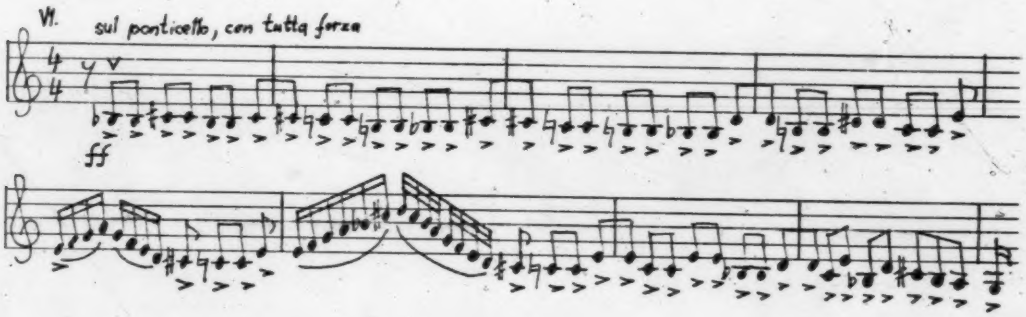
Example 105. First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, 2nd movement, Theme II, ms. 40-44.

These four measures, preceded by an eighth-note anacrusis, can be divided into two halves. The diatonic movement of the first half changes into a highly chromatic progression in the second half, causing tonal ambiguity (as in Theme I).

The leaps of the seventh and octave are alternated with steps. The range is seventeen semitones. The rhythm contains regular eighth notes, some of them ornamented by groups of grace notes.

A tendency toward a sequential treatment of small units within the theme is apparent. A sequence of a four-note pattern is found in the third measure of the theme.

Theme III (second episode), presented again by the soloist, maintains the motor-movement of the eighth notes. The forceful effect of this theme is achieved by means of continual accents, loud dynamics (fortissimo), and a special interpretative indication sul ponticello con tutta forza.



Example 106. First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, 2nd movement, Theme III, ms. 85-93.

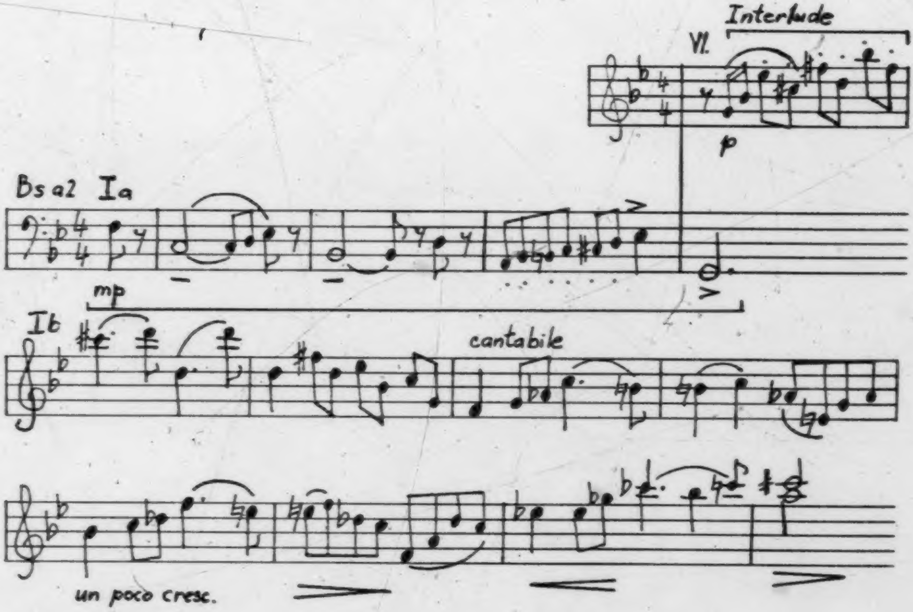
Theme III is twice as long as Theme II but its content is of such a continuous character that it does not yield to any further division into shorter phrases. Its range is a whole tone wider than that of Theme II--nineteen semitones.

The orchestral accompaniment of Theme III repeats a D minor triad. Considering D to be the tonal center, the harmonic form of the D minor scale appears to be the implied tonal basis of the whole.

Narrow intervals--the prime, second and third--are the only ones used in this melody. Two fast scale passages variegate the main idea of reiteration of pairs of tones a third apart. The placement of the opening tone on the second half of the first beat of the measure creates syncopated feeling throughout the entire theme.

3. Moderato

All important thematic material of the last movement (which is in a loose sonata form) is contained in the first theme alone. Theme I consists of two parts, Ia and Ib, which are connected by a one-measure interlude.

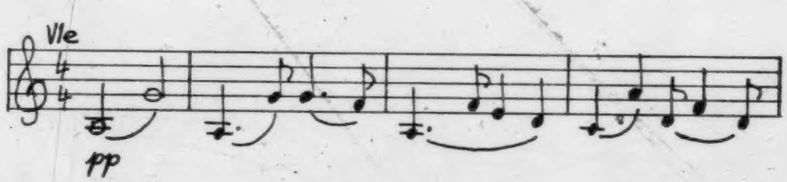


Example 107. First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, 3rd movement, Theme I, ms. 2-14.

The parts Ia and Ib are developed separately in both the exposition and development sections, so they really stand in the same relationship to each other as would Theme I and Theme II.

The connecting idea (interlude) is used extensively in the whole movement. It is often combined contrapuntally with other themes.

What is usually considered Theme II is only a contrasting idea and not a real theme, because it is not used beyond the exposition section.



Example 108. First Violin Concerto, Op. 19, 3rd movement, Theme II, ms. 25-28.

The recapitulation section of the third movement brings back the opening theme of the first movement (in augmentation) and combines it with the motive of the interlude. Thus the recapitulation of the last movement represents an extended coda for the entire work.

Theme Ia (of the third movement) is presented by two bassoons, while the interlude and Ib are carried on by the solo part. The characters of Ia, interlude, and Ib, are diverse. The half-serious, half-giocoso mood of Ia is followed by the short, undisputedly scherzoso interlude which appears two octaves higher. From there, the violin's expressive style changes in order to bring in the lyrical part Ib. The general mood of this last portion is related to the main theme of the first movement.

The tonality of the whole theme fluctuates. The center of both Ia and interlude is G; the center of Ib oscillates between G,D,C,F, and B-flat. The range of Ia is ten semitones, while that of Ib is more than twice as wide--twenty-two semitones. Both parts (and also the interlude) feature the interval of the perfect fourth. A considerable portion of the theme contains stepwise motion. All twelve tones of the chromatic scale are present in the melody. The general melodic movement of part Ia brings a gradual descent. Part Ib starts also a descending movement but returns upward toward the end to reach the high pitches of the opening again.

Regular eighth notes establish the basic rhythmic pulsation. This continuity is varied by the use of occasional quarters and dotted quarters. (Half notes tied to eighth notes, 𝅗𝅥‿♪, occur in Ia.) Unchanging speed (moderato) and meter (4/4) are maintained throughout the whole theme. The dynamics are subdued (mezzo-piano and piano), and the greater part of the violin melody is marked cantabile.

Theme II (contrasting idea) appears in the violas.

This four-measure leaping melody features intervals of the sixth and seventh. Its range is exactly one octave. Its tonality is rather uncertain if the orchestral accompaniment is taken into consideration. By itself, the melody centers on D, the Dorian mode being the implied scale.

Rhythmically, the dotted rhythm ♩. ♪ and the syncopation ♪♩♪ are conspicuous.

The tempo is slightly faster (allegro moderato) than that of Theme I (moderato). The meter does not change and the dynamics are even softer than in Theme I--pianissimo.

Theme II is an idea of secondary importance not only from the point of view of its relationship to Theme I, but because it sounds like a countermelody to the heavy chordal figuration played simultaneously by the solo violin.

CHAPTER IV

THEMES OF VOCAL WORKS

All compositions analyzed in this chapter--Opp. 9, 18, 23 and 27--represent songs for voice with piano accompaniment.

A slightly different approach to a selection of the material to be analyzed had to be applied in this section, since the formal structure of vocal music differs from that of instrumental music.[42]

In dealing with the form of a through-composed song, which is found in most of Prokofiev's early vocal works, it was not possible to select either "themes" as such or the fundamental melodic phrases as was done in the shorter piano compositions. "In the through-composed song, the music for each stanza of the poem is somehow different, which eliminates the basic formal principle of departure and return, and removes the unifying factors found in the instrumental forms."[43]

Obviously, it is quite improper and impractical for the purpose of this thesis to analyze songs, especially the longer ones, in their entirety. On the other hand, it is debatable which portion of a through-composed song is the most important or representative one of the whole.

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[42] For a discussion on this subject see Robert E. Tyndall, Musical Form (Boston: Allyn & Bacon Inc., 1964), p. 90.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

It was decided then, that the opening stanza of each song would be analyzed, since it is usually the opening that presents the kind of material that evokes the general mood of the work.

In cases where the opening measures of the song are of an introductory character, the first phrase following the introduction is selected for analysis.

Op. 18 (The Ugly Duckling) represents an exception among the vocal works. It has been possible to treat it in the same way as the instrumental compositions because this uniquely conceived musical narration (although through-composed) possesses themes similar to those found in an opera or other larger forms, both vocal and instrumental. These themes have been selected and analyzed in the usual way.

The selected vocal phrases of all works included in this chapter are analyzed independently, but in establishing their tonal centers, the piano accompaniment is taken into consideration. If the accompaniment does not contain functional harmonies, the tonal center is deduced from the melodic line itself.

Two Songs for Voice and Piano, Opus 9 (1910-1911)

The two songs, There Are Other Planets and Boat Adrift "reflect the influence of the impressionistic salon lyricism, with its subtly shifting harmonic fabric, exquisite piano texture, and completely declamatory, unmelodic vocal pattern."[44]

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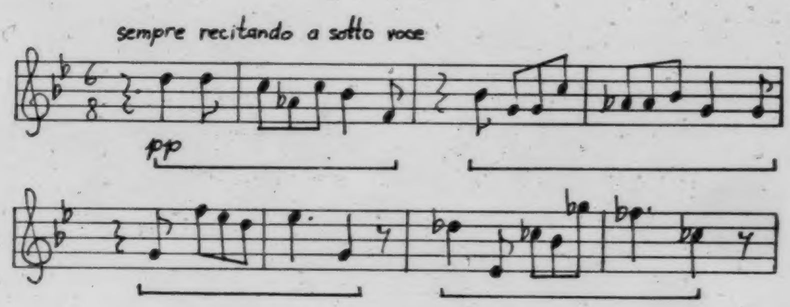
[44] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 43.

1. There are Other Planets (words by K. Balmont)

Following a short piano introduction, the voice enters with the following words:

> There are other planets, where the winds sing softer, where
> the sky is paler, the grass is thinner and higher...



Example 109. Two Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 9, No. 1, ms. 5-12.

This melody consists of four two-measure phrases. Each phrase contains different material, although there is a melodic similarity between the first two phrases, and a rhythmic similarity between both pairs of phrases.

The first three phrases seem to use the Phrygian mode on G; the last phrase modulates to A-flat as supported by the piano accompaniment.

The melodic line contains both steps and leaps, neither movement gaining a prominence. Three of the phrases, however, end by a downward leap, two leaps bringing the same interval of the perfect fourth.

The rhythm is regular within the given meter of 6/8, but non-repetitive. Still certain principles of rhythmic variation are employed in each pair of phrases. All characteristic rhythmic figures of the 6/8 meter are present: ♩. , ♩ ♪ and ♪♪♪ . Rests separate the phrases in order to underline the punctuation established in the text.

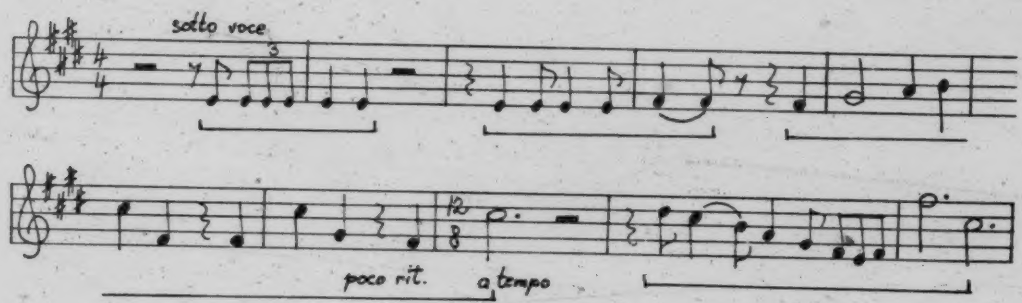
The soft dynamics (pianissimo) and the indication sempre recitando a sotto voce help to transform the atmosphere of the poem into music.

2. Boat Adrift (words by A. Apukhtin)

The opening of the second song brings the following verses:

The boat shoved off...
As dawn was about to break
a final greeting was heard,
filled with unexpected love.

The musical setting of this lyrical strophe consists of four irregular phrases.



Example 110. Two Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 9, no. 2, ms. 2-11.

The opening two phrases are very short and consist of a kind of recitative on one pitch. The third phrase is much longer and its melodic range expands to the limits of a perfect fifth. The last phrase extends the range beyond the octave, in agreement with the emotional outburst found in the text.

All perfect intervals are featured in this melody. The prime at the beginning, the fifth, fourth and octave in the later parts. The last two phrases alternate leaps with stepwise movement.

The key signature suggests the C-sharp minor tonality but a strong leaning towards F-sharp is felt, especially in the second half of the melody. This is caused by the frequent placement of the tones C-sharp and F-sharp next to each other, which makes the C-sharp a dominant of the F-sharp. The leading tones of either C-sharp or F-sharp scales are omitted.

The rhythmic design is very free; no repetitive patterns or common rhythmic figures are used. The change of the time signature from 4/4 to 12/8 (m. 9) does not really affect the overall rhythmic pulsation, since the quadruple metric character is kept. It only prolongs the last phrase somewhat.

Rests are interpolated between phrases and also within the third longest phrase. This device not only suits the vocal medium but helps to separate the rather independent images of the individual verses. As in the first song, the sotto voce singing is used.

The Ugly Duckling, for Voice and Piano, Opus 18 (1914)

This work, based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale of the same name, was composed in 1914, and reworked and orchestrated in 1932. The present study is concerned solely with the first edition of 1914.

Andersen's tale tells the story of a swan that was hatched in a duck's nest. Considered an ugly duckling, the little swan had to undergo many unpleasant and dangerous incidents before its transformation into a beautiful bird.

> The entire fairy tale is presented in the form of a uniquely conceived scena, a narration of Andersen's prose text...The entire work is constructed on a combination of melodic recitative (based on the inflections of ordinary speech) and a vividly descriptive piano accompaniment, which follows the text without interruption.[45]

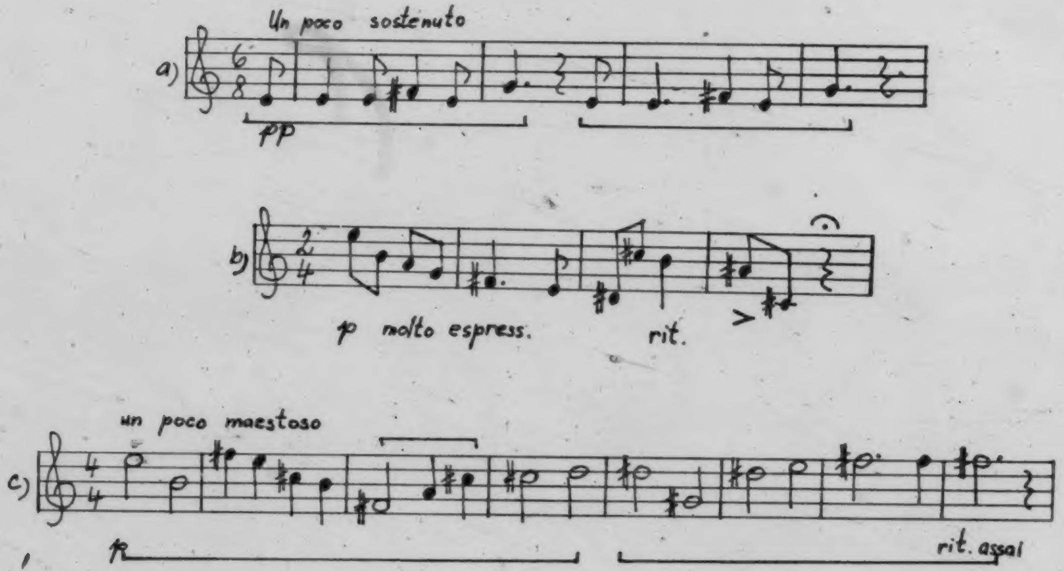
Although a through-composed technique was used in this composition, Prokofiev achieved a unity of form by constructing leitmotives which he restated several times throughout the work.

There are three main leitmotives or themes used in this piece:

a) the theme of the duckling's birthplace,

b) the theme of the duckling's suffering,

c) the theme of the duckling's transformation into a swan.



Example 111. The Ugly Duckling, Op. 18,
a) Theme I, ms. 22-26,
b) Theme II, ms. 161-164,
c) Theme III, ms. 291-298.

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[45] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 95.

All three themes maintain a common tonal center--E. The first and second themes are in a minor mode, while the third one, associated with brighter extra-musical images, changes into a musically brighter major mode. The dynamics are soft and the speed is relatively slow. Each theme, however, has a different time signature: 6/8, 2/4 and 4/4, respectively.

Theme I consists of two phrases. The rhythm of the first phrase is repetitive and its melody expands from unison to a minor third.

The second phrase is a slightly modified repetition of the first phrase. The very narrow range supports the narrative style of the story-telling.

Both the melodic and rhythmic designs of Theme II are of a non-repetitive character. The opening two measures outline very clearly the tonic (E minor) triad, but some tonal ambiguity is created in the last measure of the theme. The leading tone of the dominant (A-sharp) is not resolved but leaps downwards to the raised submediant of the key. The ambiguous sound of this measure is purposely stressed by placing the accent on its first beat.

The leaps and steps are alternated in this melody. Much greater range was reached than in the first theme--fifteen semitones.

A long pause separates each appearance of this theme from the music that follows it, in order to increase its immediate impact and to secure its prominent position of the key-theme of the whole.

Theme III is the longest one of the three. It represents much more of the true singing in comparison with the declamatory style of the previous themes. It consists of two regular four-measure phrases. The greatest melodic activity takes place in the opening phrase.

The leaps of the third, fourth and fifth are alternated with stepwise movement, but neither progression dominates. All tones of the E major scale are present. The range of the melody is just one octave. A supertonic triad is outlined in the third measure.

The rhythm is very regular but does not create any repetitive patterns. The rhythmic pulsation slows down in the second phrase, ending with ritardando assai.

No rests are used within the theme, since a smooth phrase of music was desired to express the festive and stately mood of the story's conclusion. (Notice the indication un poco maestoso.)

Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Opus 23 (1915)

In Prokofiev's own estimation, the Five Songs are related stylistically to the Sarcasms, Op. 17 (1912-1914).[46] The poems being set to music in the individual songs were written by different poets and they are of uneven literary quality.

1. Under the Roof (words by R. Goryansky)

The first song is the longest one in the cycle. It tells a story of a man who lives in a big city, just under the roof of a tall building, in a complete detachment from the nature.

The style of the poem is close to a prose:

> I have never known the sedge,
> a quiet shore with willows weeping.

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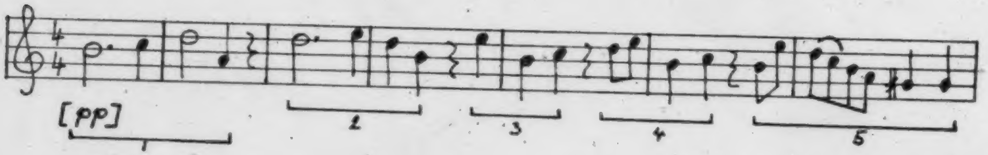
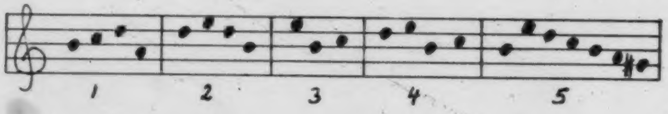
[46] Shlifstein, S.S. Prokofiev: Materials, p. 155.



Example 112. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 23, No. 1, ms. 8-14.

This section contains five motives, separated from each other by quarter rests. Almost every motive is of a different length and contains a different number of tones.

The tonal center of the whole is A. Only the first five tones of the A minor scale are used (plus the leading tone in the very end), and they circle around the tone C. Each motive presents a different type of circular motion:



Example 113. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 23, No. 1, five motives, ms. 8-14.

The tonic, A, is used very little.

The interval of the perfect fourth is featured in this melody.

Rhythmically, longer values are used in the beginning of the melody; shorter values are introduced towards the end.

The tempo is rather slow (moderato) and the dynamics are soft. A static effect is achieved by the circular melodic motion within a narrow pitch range.

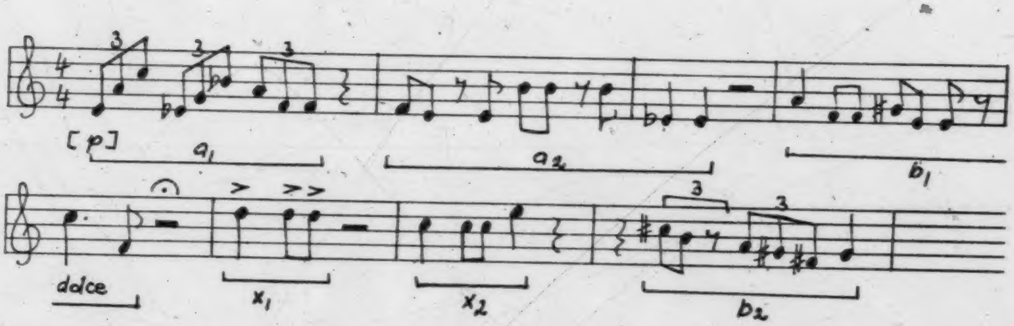
2. The Gray Dress (words by Z. Gippius)

This symbolist poem contains a series of questions asked by the poet and answered by a girl in a gray dress who "symbolizes Parting, the Daughter of Death."[47]

Oh, little girl clad in gray...
Your tresses look like cotton...
To whom do you belong?
To your mother...
or to no one?

If you wish I shall be yours.

The hazy and unrealistic quality of the dialogue is reflected in a tonal ambiguity of the music.



Example 114. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 23,
No. 2, ms. 3-10.

There is no tonal center established in the opening of the song. All twelve tones of a chromatic scale are employed, and although some of the tones are repeated several times, none of them creates a feeling of a tonal center.

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[47] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 108.

Repeated tones and small leaps are used more often than steps. The interval of the third (both major and minor) predominates.

The rhythm is very free, alternating eighth triplets with groups of regular eighth notes, occasional quarter notes, and frequent rests.

This melody consists of two phrases (a and b), each phrase being further divided into two halves. There are two separate motives (indicated x_1 and x_2) interpolated between the two halves of phrase b. (See Example 114.) The material of the phrases a and b is similar: a_1 presents a triplet idea, a_2 contrasting regular eighth notes and quarters, while the reverse is seen in the construction of b_1 and b_2.

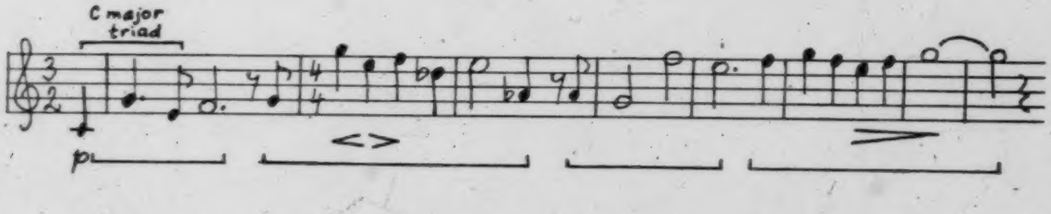
The motives x_1 and x_2 bring a climax of the whole by means of their higher pitch level and accents.

3. Trust Me (words by B. Verin)

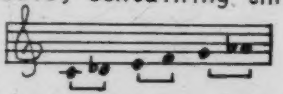
The writer of this symbolist poem was clearly imitating the style of his more-famous contemporary, K. Balmont. The poem Trust Me opens with the following words:

> Trust me,
> I shall take you
> by a forest path
> to a temple of a magic beauty.

In contrast to the previous atonal piece, the lyrical vocal part of the third song is rooted in the tonality of C major.



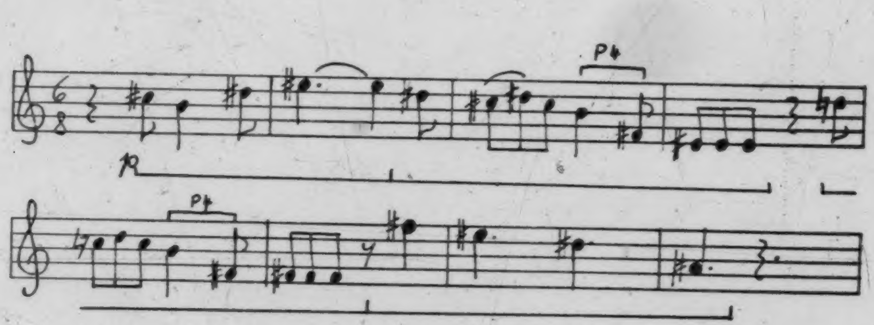
Example 115. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 23, No. 3, ms. 2-9.

The two chromatic tones used within the melody represent the upper leading tones of the tonic and dominant, respectively. The second leading tone is even properly resolved to the dominant. Following the broken tonic triad in the opening, the rest of the melody circles around the dominant, G. A special scale, containing three pairs of minor seconds, is used as a tonal basis: . Consequently, the interval of a minor second becomes a prominent factor in the overall melodic movement. The range is wide--nineteen semitones, and it is reached in only the first two measures of the vocal part.

The rhythm is free and flowing, involving a change of the meter at m. 3. The whole melody can be divided into four shorter unequal sections, as shown in Example 115.

4. In My Garden (words by K. Balmont)

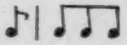
In my garden
White roses glimmer,
White and red roses glimmer.



Example 116. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 23,
No. 4, ms. 4-11.

The opening melody of the fourth song consists of two four-measure phrases. The material of the second half of the first phrase is repeated with some modifications in the first half of the subsequent phrase. The repeated sections coincide with the words repeated in the text.

The first phrase is based on a whole-tone scale. In the second phrase, the strong interval of the perfect fourth (B descending to F-sharp, m. 8) establishes the tonal center on B. (The same interval occurs at m. 6, but in that particular situation the F-sharp functions only as a nonharmonic tone.) Owing to the whole-tone melodic movement, a major second becomes the most prominent interval.

The rhythm is free at the beginning and at the end of the tune. It is more regular and repetitive in the middle, where the pattern  recurs four times.

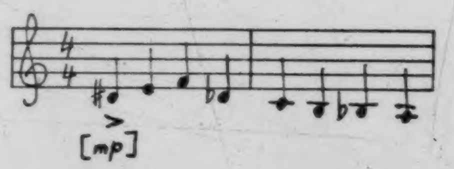
The soft, stationary dynamics, slow tempo and the whole-tone structure produce the musical image of the still atmosphere in a summer garden.

5. The Wizard (words by N. Agnivtsev)

The poem tells the story of a wizard who creates for himself an "ideal" woman. This theme gave Prokofiev an opportunity to compose a grotesque and sarcastic ballad. The recitative-like episodes, in which the story is told, alternate with a short refrain:

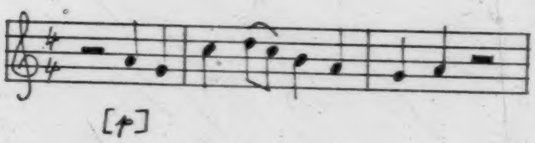
"Thus it is sung in an old ballad."

The leitmotiv of the wizard opens the composition:



Example 117. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 23, No. 5, leitmotiv, ms. 5-6.

This theme is repeated three times and followed by the refrain:



Example 118. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 23,
No. 5, refrain, ms. 13-15.

Both melodies are short and tonally ambiguous. Their melodic range is quite narrow.

Theme I (leitmotiv) is very chromatic and its melody consists mainly of minor seconds. A continuous movement of quarter notes results in rhythmic monotony.

Theme II (refrain) brings a contrast with its diatonic melodic progression. This melody is constructed of "white notes", but its tonality also fluctuates. Three tones--G, C and A compete for the position of a tonal center:

G by being the lowest tone of the melody; supported by D--its dominant;

C supported by G, the dominant, and by its placement on the strong beat of a measure;

A by means of frequent repetition, and by its placement at both the very beginning and end of the melody; it is supported by C, an interval of an upper minor third.

With the exception of the two eighth notes, the whole refrain consists of a continuous movement of quarter notes, similar to Theme I.

The range of each melody is only little over a half of an octave. The range of the refrain is placed in its entirety a whole tone above the range of Theme I.

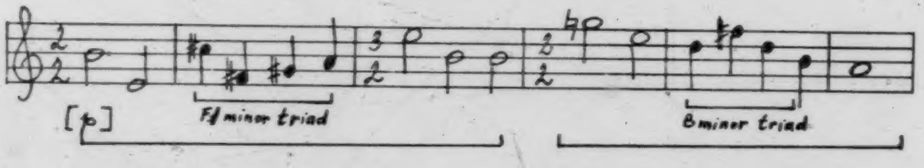
Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Opus 27 (1916)

These five songs are based on the lyric poetry of A. Akhmatova. The whole cycle was composed during a single week of November 1916. "After these songs many people believed, for the first time, that I really could write lyrical music," writes Prokofiev in his Autobiography.[48]

The songs are mostly diatonic and modal. Triple meter and soft dynamics are predominantly used.

1. The Sun Fills My Room

The sun filled the room
with a yellow transparent dust.



Example 119. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 27, No. 1, ms. 3-8.

This melody consists of two three-measure phrases. The first phrase is extended by one beat as a result of the change of meter from 2/2 to 3/2. The rhythmic movement is smooth, consisting of an alternation of half notes and quarter notes. There are no rests employed.

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[48] Shlifstein, S.S. Prokofiev: Materials, p. 155.

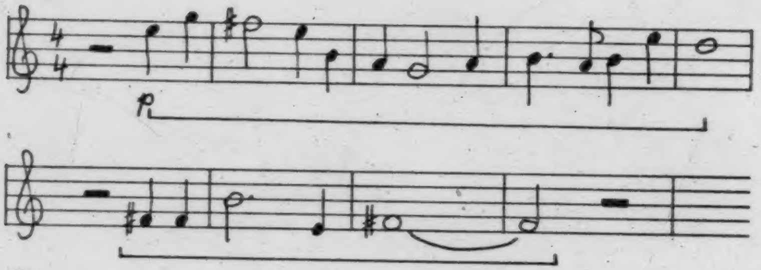
The range is fifteen semitones. The leap of the perfect fifth becomes the prominent interval.

The tonal center oscillates between E and B. The tonality or rather modality, involving the center on E, combines the Dorian and Mixolydian modes, while the second possibility (the center on B) suggests the Dorian or Aeolian modes. Two triads are outlined in the melody: the F-sharp minor triad and the B minor triad.

The fast tempo supports the joyous mood of the poem.

2. True Tenderness

True tenderness cannot be entangled
and it is so subtle.



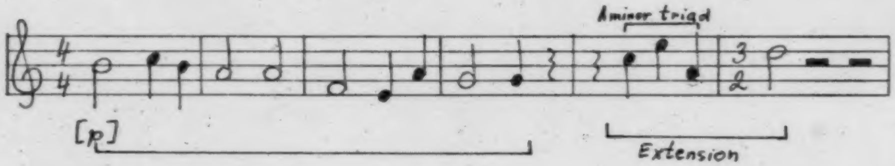
Example 120. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 27, No. 2, ms. 2-10.

This melody is somewhat similar to that of the previous song. It contains two unequal phrases (5+4 measures). The tonal center oscillates between E and B, the Dorian mode on E with the Aeolian mode on B.

The range is fifteen semitones. The prominent interval is the perfect fourth--an inversion of the perfect fifth featured in the first song. However, the speed of True Tenderness is slower and its rhythm is more varied. Its two phrases are separated by a half rest. The same type of rest is also used at both the very beginning and end of the entire melody.

3. In Remembrance of the Sun

Memories of the sun grow weak in my heart,
the grass begins to yellow.



Example 121. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 27, No. 3, ms. 2-7.

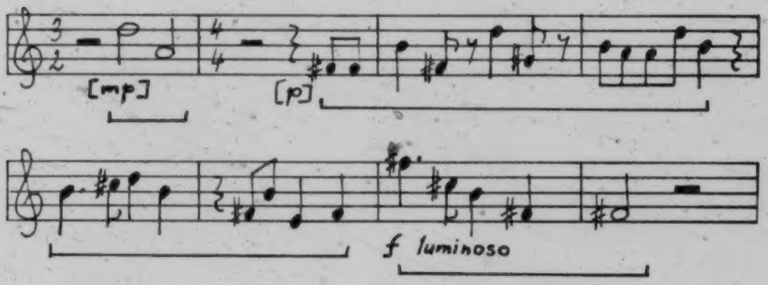
This melody presents one regular and rhythmically repetitive four-measure phrase and a two-measure extension. The very last measure is further extended by means of a change of the meter from 4/4 to 3/2. Two quarter rests separate the extension from the opening phrase. As in the first song, only half notes and quarter notes are used.

The melody is rather stepwise in the beginning; its later part features the leaps of the perfect fourth and fifth. The range is exactly one octave.

The modality oscillates between the C Ionian and A Aeolian. The A minor triad is outlined in the second-to-last measure. The quality of the Aeolian mode is the one which is better suited to express musically the sad character of the poem. The speed is very slow and unchanging.

4. Greeting

Hello!
Do you hear the slight rustle to the right of your desk?
You won't write those lines--
I have come to you.



Example 122. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 27, No. 4, ms. 1-8.

The opening and closing verses of this stanza--"Hello! I have come to you," are stated in a slow and solemn manner (andante and meno mosso, luminoso). Two phrases of a secondary significance are interpolated in between. Their speed is faster (allegretto) and the dynamics are softer.

The opening motive is in a bright D major but all the rest of the melody is in the relative B minor. The Aeolian mode is used as a tonal basis. The leaps predominate in this melody, the interval of the perfect fourth being especially emphasized.

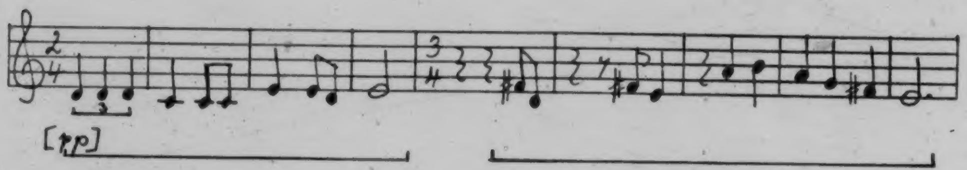
In comparison with other songs of this cycle, a great rhythmic variety is presented in this particular musical phrase. The melody is divided into small motives by frequent rests. Both the length and rhythmic construction of the individual motives are different in each case.

5. The Gray-Eyed King

The last song of the cycle returns to the style of a ballad and declamation, found so often in Prokofiev's earlier vocal works.

The first stanza of the poem brings the following sorrowful message:

> Be glorified, inconsolable grief!
> The gray-eyed king died yesterday.



Example 123. Five Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 27, No. 5, ms. 4-12.

This melody consists of two unequal phrases. The first phrase is in 2/4 meter, the second one in 3/4 meter. The rhythmic design is made to follow closely the declamation of the text.

The tonal center is E; the basic scale is the Aeolian mode on E. The melody-line is mostly stepwise and of a slightly narrower range than the opening phrases of the four previous songs (eleven semitones).

The dynamics are soft and unchanging.

CHAPTER V

THEMES OF ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Scythian Suite, Opus 20 (1915)

In the Scythian Suite, Prokofiev utilized the music of an unfinished ballet, Ala and Lolli, which he had composed a year earlier on a commission from Sergei Diaghilev.

> The four-movement Scythian Suite incorporated the principal material of Ala and Lolli, presented in the same order as the four scenes of the rejected ballet...
>
> Unlike Prokofiev's concertos and sonatas, the Suite is not based on classical forms but on a drama-like succession of scenes and episodes...
>
> The Scythian Suite was his first large-scale, independent orchestral work...in the Scythian Suite he was concerned mainly with questions of orchestration. He conceived a score of unprecedented color and magnificent sonority.[49]

Each movement of the Suite contains two or three themes which are subjected to free development. All themes are comparatively short, ranging from three to ten measures in length. Their pitch range does not exceed two octaves.

1. Worship of Veles and Ala (Allegro feroce)

Following a frenzied introduction, a majestic first theme appears in the brass instruments.

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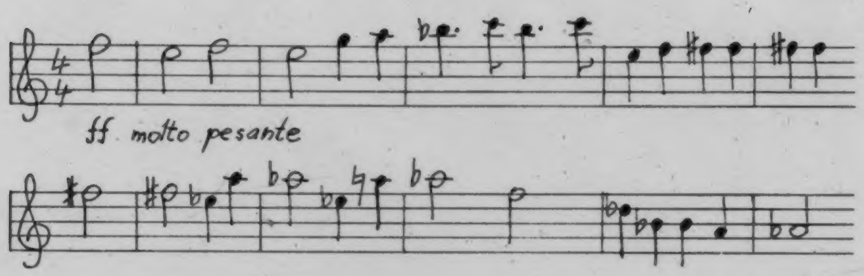
[49] Nestyev, Prokofiev, pp. 104-105.



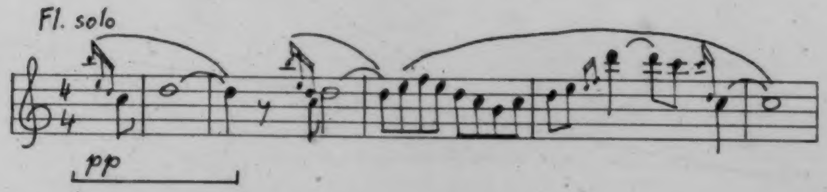
Example 124. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 1st movement,
Theme I, ms. 15-25.

This is the longest theme of the whole composition. Its ten measures introduce a continuous melody that does not readily split into smaller phrases. The rhythm is simple but not regular or repetitive. Half notes and quarter notes are mainly used. The meter and tempo are steady.

The tonal center fluctuates between B-flat and D-flat. The melodic progression often uses half steps, but whole steps and small leaps also occur. The range is sixteen semitones.

The naturally piercing sound of the brass instruments is magnified by both loud dynamics (fortissimo) and an indication molto pesante.

The second contrasting theme presents a gentle exotic melody for solo flute.



Example 125. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 1st movement,
Theme II, ms. 69-74.

The main motive of the five-measure theme is stated in the very opening. It consists of an ornamentation of the tone D by grace notes. This motive is repeated and extended in the subsequent portion of the theme.

The tonal material is derived from the Dorian mode on D. The range of this melody is fifteen semitones. Stepwise movement and sudden leaps are alternated. (The leaps are always parts of the grace-note groups.)

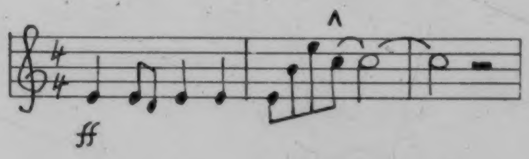
The rhythm is rather free-flowing. Most of the movement takes place in the middle portion of the theme.

This theme is played softly (pianissimo), the original speed, allegro feroce, being retarded to poco più lento.

2. Chuzhbog and the Dance of the Evil Spirits (Allegro sostenuto)

The two themes of the second movement are short and they function as recurrent leitmotivs.

Theme I resembles a martial fanfare. It is played by clarinets, French horns and strings.



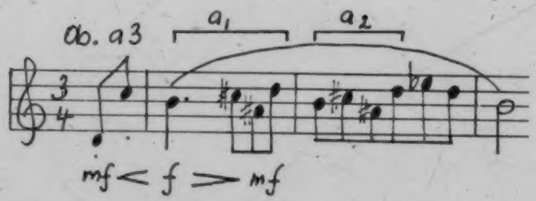
Example 126. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 2nd movement, Theme I, ms. 6-8.

This theme is three measures long, its range being just a little over an octave (fourteen semitones). Stepwise motion and a variety of small leaps up to the fifth are alternated. The rhythm includes quarter notes and eighth notes, and a long (four and a half beat) syncopated note closes the theme with an accent.

The tonal center is E, the theme being definitely modal. (The tone F-sharp is supplied by other orchestral instruments which suggests the Aeolian mode as the basic scale.)

The dynamics are loud (fortissimo), and the tempo is lively (allegro sostenuto).

Theme II is more subdued than Theme I. It is presented by three oboes in unison.



Example 127. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 2nd movement, Theme II, ms. 44-47.

This theme is also three measures long but it starts with an upbeat, and uses a different meter (3/4 as opposed to 4/4 of Theme I). As in Theme II of the first movement, the rhythmic activity is concentrated in the middle portion of the melody. Eighth notes establish the basic rhythmic pulsation.

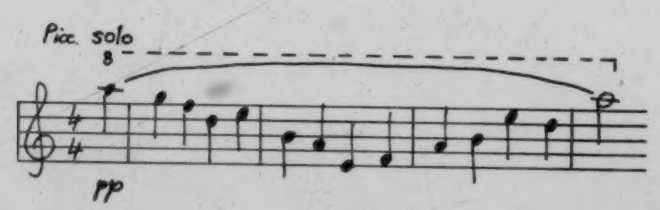
Leaps predominate in the melodic progression. The most frequently used interval is that of the third. The range is thirteen semitones. The germ idea of this theme is the twice repeated motive, marked a_1 and a_2 in Example 127.

B becomes a tonal center by virtue of its repetition and placement on the strong beat of the measure. It is supported by a frequently used upper third, D.

The tempo remains the same as that of the first theme (allegro sostenuto). The dynamics, however, are softer (mezzo-forte), and the instrumentation is more transparent.

3. Night (Andantino)

The third movement opens and closes with a tranquil diatonic melody in the piccolo. This theme is doubled by two harps and a piano at the beginning, and by glockenspiel in the conclusion.



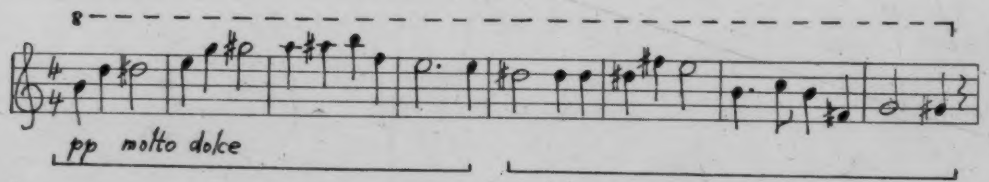
Example 128. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 3rd movement, Theme I, ms. 2-6.

The range of this melody is seventeen semitones. The Aeolian mode on A is the implied scale. The three complete measures of this theme are closely related to each other. The first measure consists of a descending step followed by a leap of a third in the same direction, and then by an ascending step. The second measure brings a transposition of the first measure, expanding the leap into a perfect fourth. The third measure contains a transposed inversion of the second measure.

The rhythmic element is nonexistent, since all notes, except the last one, are of identical value (quarter notes). The tempo is slow and unchanging (andantino). The soft dynamics (pianissimo) and the special instrumentation help to create a sound of extreme brittleness and delicacy.

Theme II is a main theme of this movement. It is developed in a variety of ways; for example, its mirror version is used very effectively towards the end of the movement.

This theme always appears in the woodwinds.



Example 129. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 3rd movement, Theme II, ms. 31-38.

Theme II consists of two regular phrases (4+4 measures). Each phrase can be further divided into smaller fragments. The whole is reminiscent rhythmically of a nursery rhyme, with some measures repeating the same pattern and others using rhythmic variation.

The rhythmic simplicity is balanced by a twisting, chromatic melodic line. E is the central tone, the chromatic scale being the tonal basis. The pitch range is seventeen semitones. Only steps and small leaps are used.

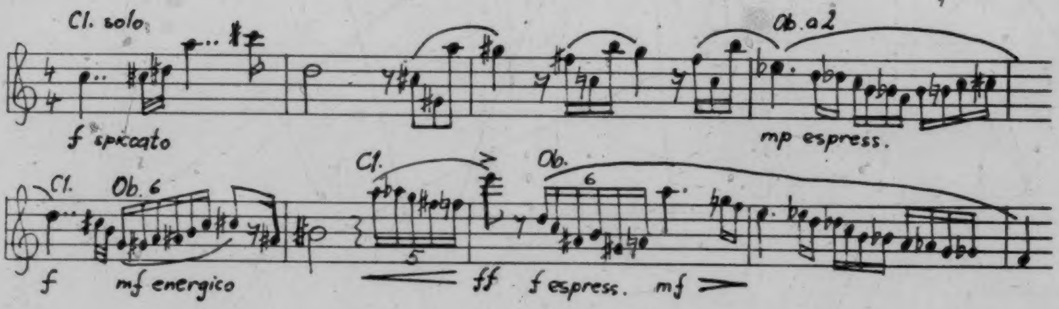
Both the tempo (andantino) and soft dynamics (pianissimo) remain unchanged for both Theme I and Theme II. The additional interpretative indication, molto dolce, is used in Theme II.

4. Lolli's Triumphal March and the Sunrise (Tempestoso)

The last movement features three themes. The first two of them are associated with the Triumphal March, and they are longer and structurally more complete than any other theme in the Suite.

The third theme is a repetitive monotonous idea which recurs many times in everchanging instrumentation. It brings a magnificent climax to the whole work--the Sunrise.

Theme I is introduced in an interplay of oboes and clarinets.



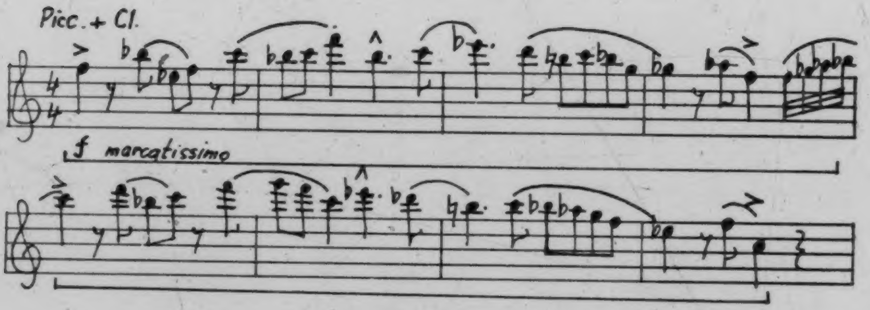
Example 130. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 4th movement,
Theme I, ms. 20-27.

This marching theme is eight measures long. It contains sharp dotted rhythms which are embellished by chromatic scales in the second part of the theme. The overall rhythmic pattern is irregular.

The chromatic scale is the tonal basis of this theme, the modulating character of which makes it difficult to establish a tonal center. The most prominent tone seems to be the note A. This theme features the widest range of all themes in the Suite--twenty-three semitones. Besides the semitone, the tritone and wider leaps (the seventh, octave and ninth) occur.

The tempo is un poco sostenuto, and the dynamics are mostly loud with minor gradual changes in volume. Other interpretative indications include spiccato, espressivo and energico.

Theme II is presented by a piccolo and an E-flat clarinet.



Example 131. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 4th movement, Theme II, ms. 52-59.

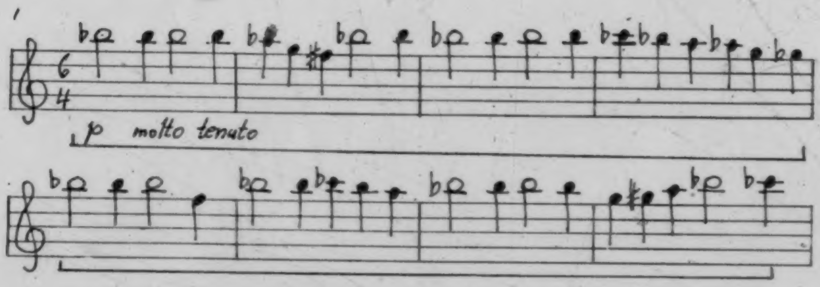
This regular eight-measure theme consists of two halves (4+4 measures) which are rhythmically identical. Quarter notes, dotted quarters, eighth notes and eighth rests are alternated in such a way that dotted and syncopated patterns are created. Two types of accents are used (> and ∧), the dynamics remain loud for the whole theme, and a marcatissimo style of play is indicated.

Melodically, the second half of the theme is a variation of the first half. The melody alternates steps with leaps. (Leaps up to the perfect fifth are used.) The tonal center is F. All tones of the chromatic scale (on F) are present with the exception of a major third (A-natural) and a major seventh (E-natural). The pitch range is nineteen semitones.

The tempo of the second theme changes to allegro.

The Sunrise section restores a slower speed, andante sostenuto.

Theme III (the Sunrise theme) first appears in clarinets, trumpets, glockenspiel and celesta, marked molto tenuto.



Example 132. Scythian Suite, Op. 20, 4th movement, Theme III, ms. 126-133.

This theme is eight measures long and of a regular structure (4+4). Its smallest unit is a three-beat motive 𝅗𝅥 ♩ , sometimes varied into ♩ ♩ ♩ , which constitutes a half measure in the existing 6/4 time. This motive contains mostly repeated tones or stepwise chromatic progressions. B-flat becomes a tonal center mainly by virtue of its constant repetition. The chromatic scale is the tonal basis. The range is very narrow--only six semitones.

The dynamics are soft in the theme's first statement but they increase in its subsequent repetitions in the process of building up the climax.

Classical Symphony, Opus 25 (1917)

> Almost all the thematic material of the Symphony was inspired by the general spirit of the pre-Beethoven symphonic style... Throughout the entire symphony one encounters the traditional Viennese device of sudden shifts from limpid piano to tutti fortissimo...Here, too, are the scale-like and arpeggiated figures, octave leaps, elegant trills, and grace notes...The composer retained the composition of the Haydn orchestra, including paired wind instruments without trombones.[50]

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[50] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 146.

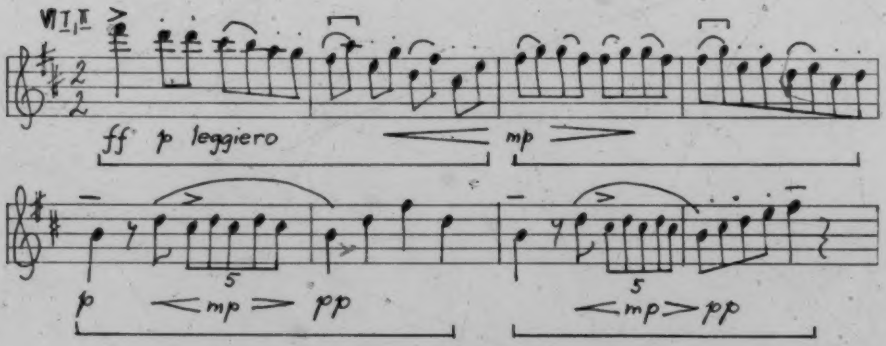
The Symphony consists of four movements: Allegro, Larghetto, Gavotta (Non troppo allegro), and Finale (Molto vivace).

1. Allegro

The first movement is written in sonata form. It features two themes, both gay and light, alternating staccato notes with short legato groups. Both themes have the same fast speed and 2/2 time signature.

Theme I consists of two parts, Ia and Ib.

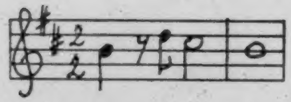
After a two-measure introduction, Theme Ia appears in the violins.



Example 133. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 1st movement, Theme Ia, ms. 3-10.

This theme consists of two four-measure phrases. Each phrase can be divided into two halves. The first phrase is in D major; the second phrase shifts into the parallel B minor.

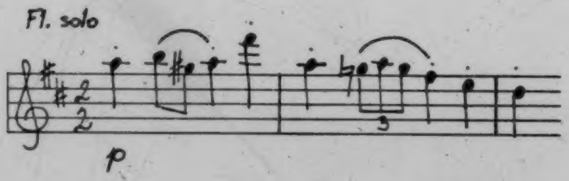
Passages containing stepwise movement are alternated with those constructed of broken chords. Consequently, the intervals of the second and third are the most conspicuous ones. The range is nineteen semitones.

The first phrase contains sequential progressions of two-note motives in its second and fourth measures. The basis of the second phrase is the following simple melody  which is repeated twice. Each time the C-sharp is embellished by a trill which is written out as a quintuplet of eighths. Upon the last tone, B, a broken tonic chord is constructed in the first case, and an ascending five-note scale in the second.

The rhythm of the first phrase presents a continuous movement of eighths, while a greater rhythmic variety is achieved in the second phrase.

The dynamics are soft (pianissimo to mezzo-piano) with the exception of the first beat which is a loud, accented chord played by the full orchestra. The theme is marked leggiero.

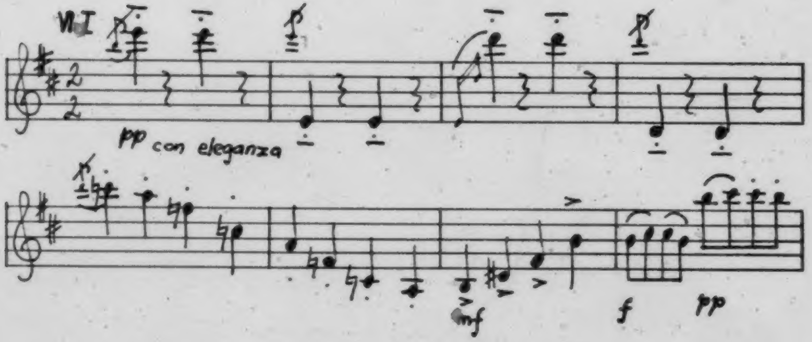
The second part of this theme, Ib, consists of a single two-measure phrase introduced by a solo flute and repeated sequentially by other woodwinds and strings.



Example 134. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 1st movement, Theme Ib, ms. 19-21.

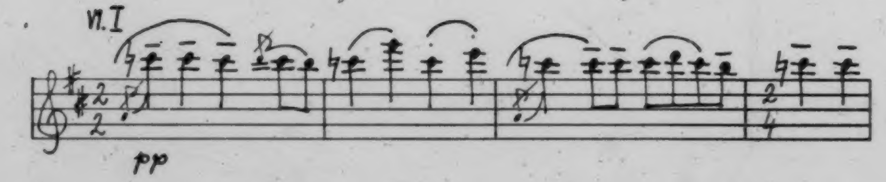
The melody circles around the dominant of D major (A), the tonic being reached at the end. The leaps and steps are alternated. The range is sixteen semitones. The rhythmic pattern of the first measure is elaborated in the second measure; the two eighth notes of the second beat are expanded into an eighth triplet. The dynamics remain soft as in Theme Ia.

Theme II creates a small aba form. The opening eight measures carry the main idea in A major.



Example 135. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 1st movement, Theme IIa, ms. 46-53.

The first four measures of Example 135 are then restated and followed by a contrasting middle section.



Example 136. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 1st movement, Theme IIb, ms. 58-61.

These four measures are repeated sequentially a half step higher with a modified ending that prepares for the return of the first part of the theme. This time, the second phrase of Example 135 is varied, and a strong dominant-to-tonic cadence in A major concludes the whole. The overall range of Theme II is thirty-two semitones.

The first portion of Theme II features two-octave leaps and repeated tones. Several grace notes ornament the main beats with both neighbouring tones and big leaps. Besides the repeated tones, progressions of broken triads are important melodically. The prime is the prominent interval of the whole.

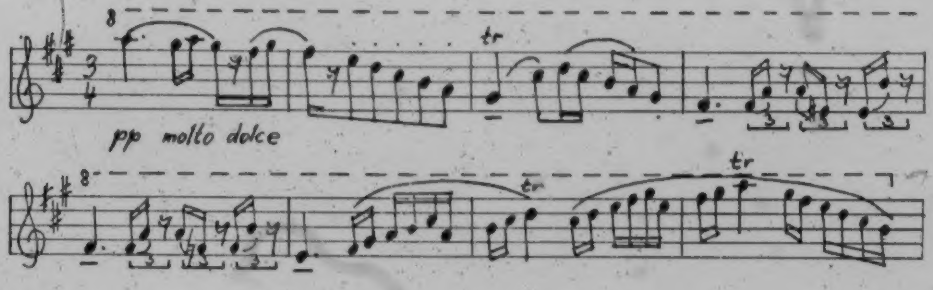
The following harmonic scheme in A major is outlined by the melodic line: I, V_7, ♭VI, V/V. The ending on V/V suggests a temporary digression to the area of the dominant (E). The middle section stresses the dominant (C) of a lowered sixth degree (F) of the A major scale. (The center on F is clearly established by the accompaniment of the bassoon and double-basses.)

The rhythm consists of regular quarter notes, quarter rests and eighth notes.

The loud and soft dynamics are alternated in the manner of subito changes.

2. Larghetto

The second movement contains two themes. The first ornamented and broad theme is given to the first violins in their high register.



Example 137. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 2nd movement, Theme I, ms. 5-12.

This melody does not remind one of typical slow themes of the compositions of the classical era. It is much closer to the style of the late baroque period.[51]

It is difficult to make any divisions in this long, continuous phrase. Every measure seems to be a separate unit rhythmically but the melodic idea continues throughout the entire theme. Symmetry of melodic construction is noticeable here. From the high point of the opening, the melody descends an octave and a half lower by means of a stepwise ornamented movement. The two middle measures repeat the same material which has a character of a short interlude. After this, the melody ascends (in the same fashion as it previously descended) to reach the high pitch of the opening. The highest tone represents the tonic (A); the lowest tone reaches the dominant (E). The stepwise movement brings out the interval of the second. The A major tonality is the basis of the whole theme.

The rhythmic pulsation of eighth notes is established by the orchestral accompaniment, and it is also noticeable in the theme itself. The dotted quarter, used at the beginning, occurs three more times in different measures of the theme. The other longer value--the quarter note--is always ornamented by a trill. The two middle measures introduce sixteenth triplets, each triplet consisting of two notes followed by a rest.

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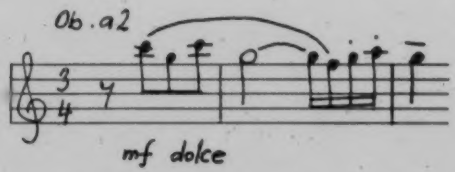
[51] For support of this view and further documentation, see M. Tarakanov, The Symphonic Style of Prokofiev (Moscow: Muzyka, 1968), pp. 51-54.

The dynamics are very soft (pianissimo), the tempo is slow, and a legato style of play predominates.

Theme I is repeated by a flute with modifications in its second half. These two statements of the first theme are followed by a perpetual movement of sixteenth notes consisting of repeated tones and scale passages. This section is played pizzicato by the whole string division, and staccato by woodwind instruments. After a modulation to C major, a short Theme II, stated by two oboes, appears above the repeated chords of the orchestra.

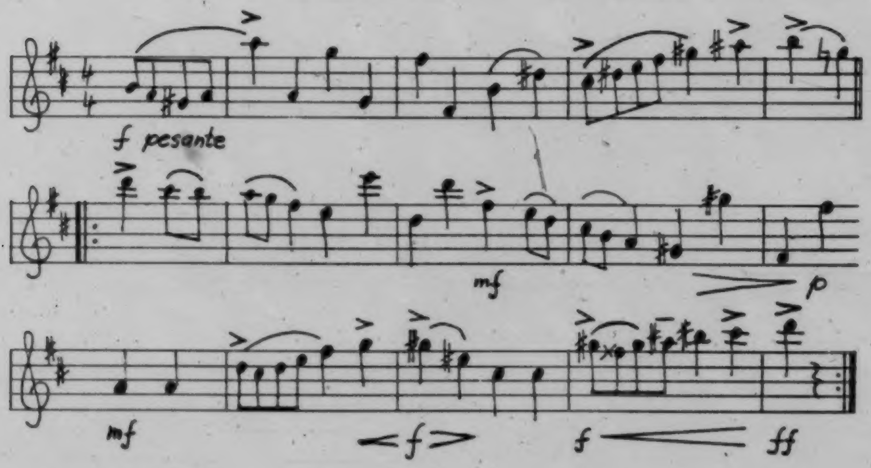


Example 138. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 2nd movement, Theme II, ms. 35-37.

This theme is subsequently repeated by flutes and later by clarinets. The interval of the perfect fourth, twice repeated in the opening, is an important element of this theme which serves as the basis of a short development, found in the later part of the movement. The tonal center of Theme II is C (the dominant, G, being emphasized), and its range is only seven semitones. The rhythm is rather free and heterogeneous. The phrase is to be performed dolce and for the most part legato. The dynamics are louder than in Theme I (mezzo-forte).

3. Gavotta (Non troppo allegro)

The Gavotta is written in a traditional ternary form, with a trio (musette) in its middle part. The first theme of the Gavotta enters without any introduction, presented by the strings.



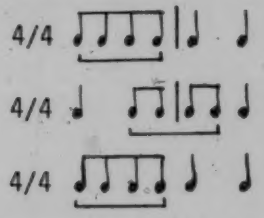
Example 139. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 3rd movement, Theme I, ms. 1-12.

This theme consists of three four-measure phrases. The second and third phrases are repeated. Each phrase can be divided into two halves. Octave leaps are alternated with stepwise movement.

The overall tonal center is D but other temporary centers are established in the course of the melody. The second half of the first phrase centers on B, the second half of the second phrase brings out F-sharp, and in the middle of the last phrase a center of C-sharp is established.

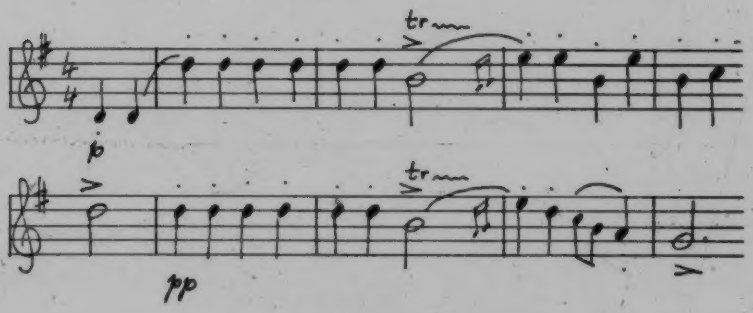
The range is twenty-two semitones.

Quarter notes and groups of four eighth notes are alternated, but their placement within the metric scheme changes. The following rhythmic groupings are created:



The groups of eighth notes are slurred together; the quarter notes are played in a détaché manner. Accents are used alternately on the first, third and fourth beats. The dynamics are loud, using a decrescendo in the second third of the theme. The speed, non troppo allegro, is unchanging.

The trio appears in the subdominant tonality (G major). Theme II is introduced by the woodwinds.



Example 140. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 3rd movement, Theme II, ms. 12-20.

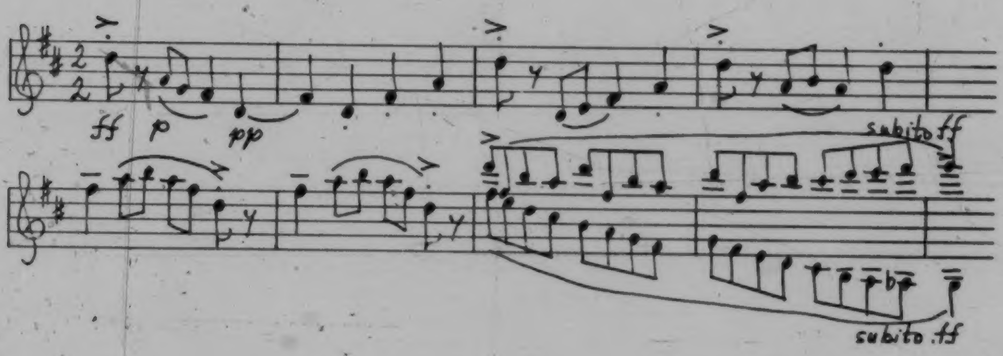
This melody sounds over a drone bass of the strings and timpani. It consists of two four-measure phrases which can be divided into halves. The dynamics are soft (piano) in order to provide contrast to the loud first part of the Gavotta.

The simple melody of Theme II features mainly repeated tones which are played staccato. The dominant (D) is the tone which is reiterated continuously, and only in the end is the tonic reached. The pitch range is fourteen semitones.

The rhythmic movement consists of regular quarter notes. There occurs one half note in each phrase, and these are accented and embellished by trills.

4. Finale (Molto vivace)

The last movement is again in sonata form. It presents three themes. This movement is somewhat similar to the first movement of this symphony. Besides the employment of the common form, tonality (D major) and time signature (2/2), there exists a close relationship between the first themes of each movement.



Example 141. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 4th movement, Theme I, ms. 1-9.

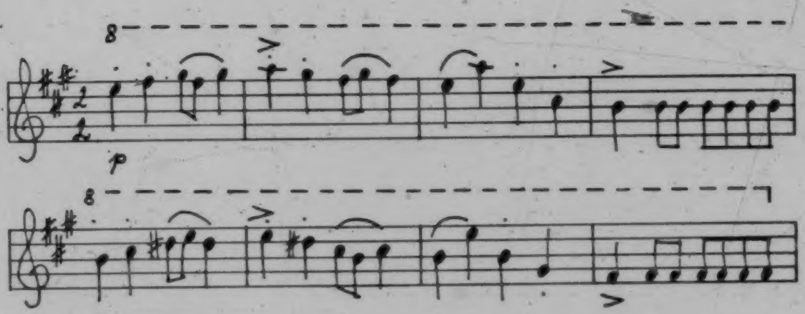
Comparing Examples 141 and 133, it may be observed that the following features are common to both themes:

1. identical length;
2. the same division into phrases;
3. the tonic harmony (in the original D major) is outlined at the beginning of the theme;
4. the second half of the theme modulates to a new key;
5. quarter and eighth notes are alternated;
6. certain motives in the second phrases are repeated (ms. 5 and 7 of Example 133, ms. 5 and 6 of Example 141);
7. the first loud note is followed by a subito piano;
8. the same shape of the melodic curve: the high tone of the opening is followed by a descending movement while the last measure contains an ascending stepwise movement;
9. the intervals of the second and third are prominent.

Naturally, the actual melody of Theme I of the fourth movement is different from that of Theme I of the first movement. Also the range of the later theme is much wider--thirty-six semitones compared to nineteen semitones. The first three quarters of the present theme contain ascending and descending arpeggi of the tonic chord, with passing tones interpolated between some of its members. The last two measures bring a scale that accommodates a modulation to G major--a subdominant tonality of the original D major.

This theme is presented by the first violins. The flutes (doubled by clarinets an octave lower) add the top part of the contrapuntal ending.

Theme II is also eight measures long. It is given to the woodwinds.

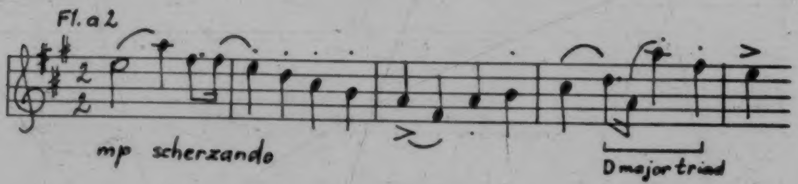


Example 142. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 4th movement, Theme II, ms. 50-57.

The first half is in A major while the second brings a sequential repetition of the first half a perfect fourth lower. The first phrase outlines the tonic harmony, the second phrase the dominant harmony. Steps, broken triads and repeated tones are all present in this melody. The pitch range is narrower than that of Theme I (fifteen semitones). The rhythm is regular and partly repetitive. It is interesting to note that the accents are used on the opening beats of the even measures rather than the odd ones.

The dynamics of this theme are soft (piano), and nonlegato touch predominates.

Theme III (closing theme) consists of only one four-measure phrase which is presented by two flutes and immediately repeated by the first violins.



Example 143. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, 4th movement, Theme III, ms. 75-79.

This bright scherzando tune is considered a "typically Russian melody very closely related to one of the themes of Rimsky-Korsakov's Snow Maiden."[52]

The theme starts and ends on the dominant of A major (E) and stresses the tonic (A) in its middle. The melody descends in the first half and ascends in the second half. The subdominant triad is outlined in the penultimate measure, just before the final settling on the dominant. The leaps of the fourth and third alternate with steps. The range is fifteen semitones. A regular quarter-note pulsation is maintained throughout, the rhythmic movement being embellished by two dotted-note figures in the first and fourth measures.

The greater part of the theme is played staccato. The dynamics are soft (mezzo-piano).

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[52] Nestyev, Prokofiev, p. 147. A similar observation is made by Tarakanov in The Symphonic Style of Prokofiev, p. 55.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF THEMES OF PROKOFIEV'S EARLY PERIOD

In this final chapter, a comparison of themes for different media will be drawn, and general characteristics of the construction of the themes will be revealed. This will be achieved with the aid of statistical data collected in the course of the research. The statistical information covers the following aspects of melodic construction:

1. Pitch range
2. Prominent intervals
3. Tonality, modality, scales
4. Phrasing
5. Meter
6. Rhythm
7. Various types of sound effects.

The dynamics and tempo are not considered basic elements of construction of Prokofiev's themes, since the same themes in their restatements often appear in different tempi or they are stated with different dynamics without the themes' basic character being altered.

1. Pitch Range

The average range of all themes studied in this thesis is twenty semitones--a span of the interval of the minor thirteenth.

The average range of the themes of the piano compositions alone is slightly wider--twenty-two semitones. In this medium, the narrowest ranges are found in the themes of the Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 4 (fourteen semitones per theme on the average), while the Piano Sonatas, particularly the first and third ones (Opp. 1 and 28, respectively) feature themes with the greatest melodic ranges (on the average, thirty-one and thirty-three semitones per theme, respectively).

The widest range of a single theme is fifty-five semitones, which is slightly more than four and a half octaves. There are two themes of this great span: Theme I of the fourth movement of the Second Piano Sonata, Op. 14 and the introductory theme of the First Piano Concerto, Op. 10.

The very narrow ranges are usually associated with short motives that substitute for themes in some compositions. The narrowest of all ranges consists of three semitones only. It is found in the main motive of the fourth Vision Fugitive, Op. 22. Another three-semitone theme occurs in the vocal piece, Ugly Duckling, Op. 18.

In general, the vocal music contains themes with the narrowest ranges of all media--twelve semitones on the average.

The greatest ranges are found in the themes of the works for solo instruments with accompaniment--twenty-seven semitones on the average. The ranges of the themes of the orchestral compositions are slightly below average--eighteen semitones.

2. Prominent Intervals

The occurrences of all the intervals, from the prime to the ninth, were studied from the point of view of the frequency of their use in the construction of melodic themes. The intervals bigger than the ninth were not considered because although they have occurred, they never represented the characteristic leaps of the themes.

No distinction was made between the major and minor intervals, since neither quality seemed to predominate. For example, the minor second was used extensively in themes which were chromatic and stepwise, but the purely diatonic or whole-tone stepwise themes, which featured major seconds, were equally numerous.

It was discovered that all of Prokofiev's themes of the period being studied are predominantly stepwise. The second is by far the most frequently used interval of the themes of any medium.

The second is followed by the third which confirms the composer's affinity for themes constructed of broken tertian chords.

Next come the four perfect intervals--the fourth, prime, fifth and octave in this order--and these are followed by the dissonant leap of the tritone. The sixth, seventh and ninth come only after the tritone.

Considering the piano works alone, the most often used interval of the second is followed by the perfect intervals which form the following succession in order of preference: the fifth, fourth, prime and octave, the last two being used equally often. The succession of the remaining intervals is identical with the general pattern outlined above.

The themes of Prokofiev's instrumental music seem to stress repeated notes. The interval of the second is immediately followed by the prime. The order of the following prominent intervals differs considerably from the overall scheme: the third, fourth and seventh are used equally often, followed by the fifth, octave and sixth. The tritone and ninth do not occur among the characteristic leaps at all. It is interesting to note that in the music of this medium the interval of the seventh is used more frequently than the fifth, octave or sixth.

In accordance with the traditional vocal style, the vocal themes use mostly steps and small leaps, and the dissonances of the tritone, seventh and ninth are avoided as much as possible. The order of the characteristic intervals, as employed in the themes of vocal medium, is as follows: the second, fourth, prime, fifth, third, sixth and octave. The last three intervals are equally frequent.

The abundant use of the prime (it is the third most often used interval) shows that a chanting on one pitch or, in another words, the declamatory style, is an important part of Prokofiev's melodies in the vocal medium.

The orchestral works use the tritone in their themes more often than works of any other medium. The tritone is preceded by the second, third, fourth and prime, and followed by the fifth, seventh, octave and ninth, the last four intervals being equally important. The sixth is never used as a prominent interval in the orchestral works.

3. Tonality, Modality, Scales

Various tonal systems are applied in the themes of all media. The traditional major and minor scales are used as often as chromatic scale or medieval modes. Of the modes, the Dorian and Phrygian forms are preferred.

The scales and tonalities or modalities on the natural ("white") keys are particularly favoured. They are often modified by whole-tone progressions or include secondary leading tones of various scale degrees. Both the upper and lower leading tones of the dominant and tonic are more characteristic than leading tones of other scale degrees. In some cases, the repeated use of the secondary leading tone may change the character of the basic scale. For example, the recurrence of the lower leading tone of the dominant may change the underlying major mode into the Lydian one.

Purely diatonic themes often stand side by side with the fully chromatic ones in the same composition.

Occasionally, scales of original construction appear. They consist of various combinations of half steps, whole steps and thirds. Of these, the scale which regularly alternates half steps with whole steps, and Hungarian scales are employed most often. A good number of Prokofiev's themes modulate or are tonally unstable and ambiguous. The tonal instability is often caused by the use of sequential progressions within the themes. The sequences are found with abundance in the themes of all media with the exception of the vocal music. In spite of this, the vocal themes are least tonal of all. They are mostly based on modes, and several of them border on atonality.

Most of Prokofiev's themes in any medium contain more than one tonal center. The multiplicity of tonal centers is the result of inner modulation, abrupt tonal shifts, introduction of chromaticism, general tonal fluctuation or a combination of these elements.

4. Phrasing

The division of the themes into phrases is an important factor in a composer's overall compositional style. In accordance with the neoclassic principle of regularity of phrasing, it was discovered that a majority of Prokofiev's themes is constructed of very regular phrases. The most "classical" thematic structure, consisting of two four-measure phrases (4+4), is found in almost three-quarters of all material studied. This regular phrasing pattern includes several types of variations, all made of even number of measures:

4+4+4 or longer themes dividing into four-measure units;

2+2;

2+2+2 or longer structures based on two-measure units;

4+2 or 2+4 (used occasionally).

Eight-measure phrases are the longest indivisible ones.

The remaining one-quarter of the themes is constructed of

a) phrases containing an odd number of measures (3, 3+3, 5 etc.);

b) phrases including incomplete measures (4+1/4, 7+1/2 etc.);

c) phrases of different lengths standing side by side (6+5+6 etc.);

d) short one to two-measure motives which serve as thematic material, but, because of their shortness, do not create phrases at all.

The regularly structured themes represent more than two-thirds of all themes of the piano works. The greatest irregularity of construction is seen in the themes of the Sarcasms, Op. 17.

In the orchestral works, the regular themes represent an even greater percentage than in the piano compositions--three-quarters of all works selected. This is due to the fact that the "classical" themes of the Classical Symphony, Op. 25 represent a relatively great portion of all themes of this small group of compositions. The least regularity is found in the themes of the first two movements of the Scythian Suite, Op. 20.

The themes of both the vocal music and that for solo instrument with accompaniment show a slight preference for irregular phrases, this being most conspicuous in the Violin Concerto, Op. 19 and Songs of Opp. 23 and 27.

5. Meter

The problem of phrasing is closely connected with that of metric regularity or irregularity. There are not many irregular time signatures in Prokofiev's themes, but on several occasions there occur changes of meter within a single theme which accompany or even create irregular designs of phrases. Metric irregularity is found mostly in the vocal compositions. There it supports the free declamatory style employed in this medium, as was pointed out earlier in connection with the intervallic structure of the themes.

The duple (and quadruple) meters--4/4, 2/4, 2/2, 6/4, 6/8, 12/8--represent well over three-quarters of all time signatures employed. The 4/4 time itself is by far the most often used meter in every medium. The triple meters, including 3/2, 3/4, 3/8 and 9/8 represent about one-seventh of all time signatures. The exceptions of 5/8, 7/8 and 18/16 meters all occur once each in the compositions for piano solo.

In the piano works, the time signatures of their themes form the following succession in the order of frequency of their use: 4/4, 2/4, 6/8, 3/4, 12/8, 3/8, 2/2. Each of the 9/8, 6/4, 5/8, 7/8 and 18/16 meters are used on a single occasion only. In this group, the 3/2 time is not employed at all.

The themes of the works for solo instrument with accompaniment use exclusively 4/4 and 6/8 meters.

In the themes of the orchestral compositions, the meters appear in the following order according to the frequency of their use: 4/4, 2/2, 3/4, 2/4 and 6/4.

The time signatures of the vocal music create the succession of 4/4, 3/2, 6/8 followed by 2/4 and 2/2 (the later two being used equally often) and these are followed by single appearances of 3/4 and 12/8 meters.

6. Rhythm

Almost one-half of all themes starts with an anacrusis or incomplete measure. This fact is interesting in itself but it does not affect or influence the rhythmic structure within the themes.

The following aspects of the rhythmic designs were studied:

a) the regularity or irregularity of rhythmic pulsation;

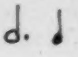
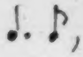
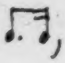
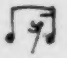
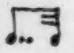
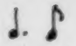
b) the subdivision of beats, the use of dotted patterns, the use of triplets and other irregular divisions;

c) shifted accents, cross-rhythmic devices and syncopations;

d) rests as important elements in the construction of themes.

a) An absolute majority of Prokofiev's themes is based on a regular rhythmic pulsation. It means that the rhythmic movement consists of reiteration of the main beats, the latter being established by a given meter. The main beat and its breakdown are alternated regularly to form the following kind of pattern: ♩ ♫ ♩ ♫ etc.

Almost one-third of these rhythmically regular themes belongs to a special category in which no different rhythmic values are alternated. These themes consist of reiteration of one particular value, be it either quarter, eighth or sixteenth note. The themes made of even quarter notes seem to lack the rhythmic element altogether and they create a static and vague atmosphere. The themes consisting of regular pulsation of the shorter values (eighth or sixteenth notes) convey the characteristic element of motor-movement. The motor-pulsation is found in themes of all media, but most characteristically in the piano music and that for solo instrument with accompaniment.

b) A very fine subdivision of beats is found only rarely in Prokofiev's themes in any medium. The shortest values are often by-products of the employment of sharp, dotted patterns. Not counting the rhythm of  , four types of dotted patterns are used, listed here in the order of frequency of their use: , ,  and  . All four types of these patterns are found in the themes of all media, with the exception of the vocal music, which uses only the first type ().

In general, the themes which contain dotted rhythms represent almost one-half of all themes studied.

The subdivision of beats into triplets and other irregular groups of notes is found in about one-seventh of all themes. The triplet is used more often than any other irregular subdivision. It is of interest that the irregular subdivisions of beats are used less frequently in the themes of the piano works than in themes of any other medium.

c) Shifted accents and other cross-rhythmic devices were found rather exceptionally. Four cases of these rhythmic irregularities were noted in the piano works, and two in the concertos. The themes of neither the vocal nor orchestral compositions employ any of these devices.

The only form of shifted accent, which occurs quite frequently, is syncopation.[53] The syncopations are used in one-seventh of all the themes. They are found most often in the themes of the piano compositions, and least frequently in those of the vocal works.

d) The rest represents an important element of construction in one-half of the themes of the vocal medium. This fact further confirms Prokofiev's intention to aim at the declamatory quality in his vocal style.

Considering the music of other media, the rest is important in the construction of one-sixth of all themes.

7. Various Types of Sound Effects

a) Grace Notes

The grace notes, including a single grace note, larger groups of grace notes, and trills, are used in one-sixth of all themes, excluding the vocal music.

b) Accents

The themes which use accents as important parts of their expressive content represent one-third of all themes, excepting again the vocal compositions which employ accents very rarely.

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[53] In this treatise, a distinction has been made between simple syncopation as a form of a shifted accent within a single measure, and a chain of shifted accents which create cross-rhythm and cause overall dissipation of the original metric structure.

c) Touch[54]

The themes were divided into three general categories according to their smooth or detached quality:

the themes using predominantly legato touch;

the themes using detached (or staccato) touch;

the themes combining both above-mentioned types of touch.

The same number of themes was found in both the second and third categories (each representing over one-third of all themes), while the legato themes represent only one-quarter of all themes.

To summarize the style of Prokofiev's themes of his early period, it can be said that the composer was turning away from romanticism and that he used many neo-classic traits.

This is seen mainly in the spheres of phrasing and rhythm--in the regularity of both the structure and rhythmic pulsation, simplicity of rhythmic patterns, preference for duple meters and predominance of dotted rhythms and grace notes over irregular subdivisions of beats (triplets etc.).

In the area of melodic construction, the use of scalewise progressions, repeated tones and broken chords is also more neo-classic than romantic.

However, the character of the implied harmonies and tonalities within the themes is the one which goes beyond the limits of both the romantic and neo-classic traditions. Prokofiev employs modulating themes (which often connect distant tonal centers or present half-step tonal shifts, etc.), themes with several tonal centers, modal themes, those with fluctuating centers, and a fair number of themes which are tonally uncertain or even border on atonality. All these take part in the general trend of dissipation of a tonal system of nineteenth-century music and participate in the creation of a new tonal idiom of twentieth-century music.

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[54] This aspect of the sound does not concern the vocal medium, of course.

The fusion of these novel tendencies in the area of tonality, and neo-classic ones in the spheres of rhythm and melodic progression, creates Prokofiev's personal style, which manifests itself clearly in the majority of themes of his early period.

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